

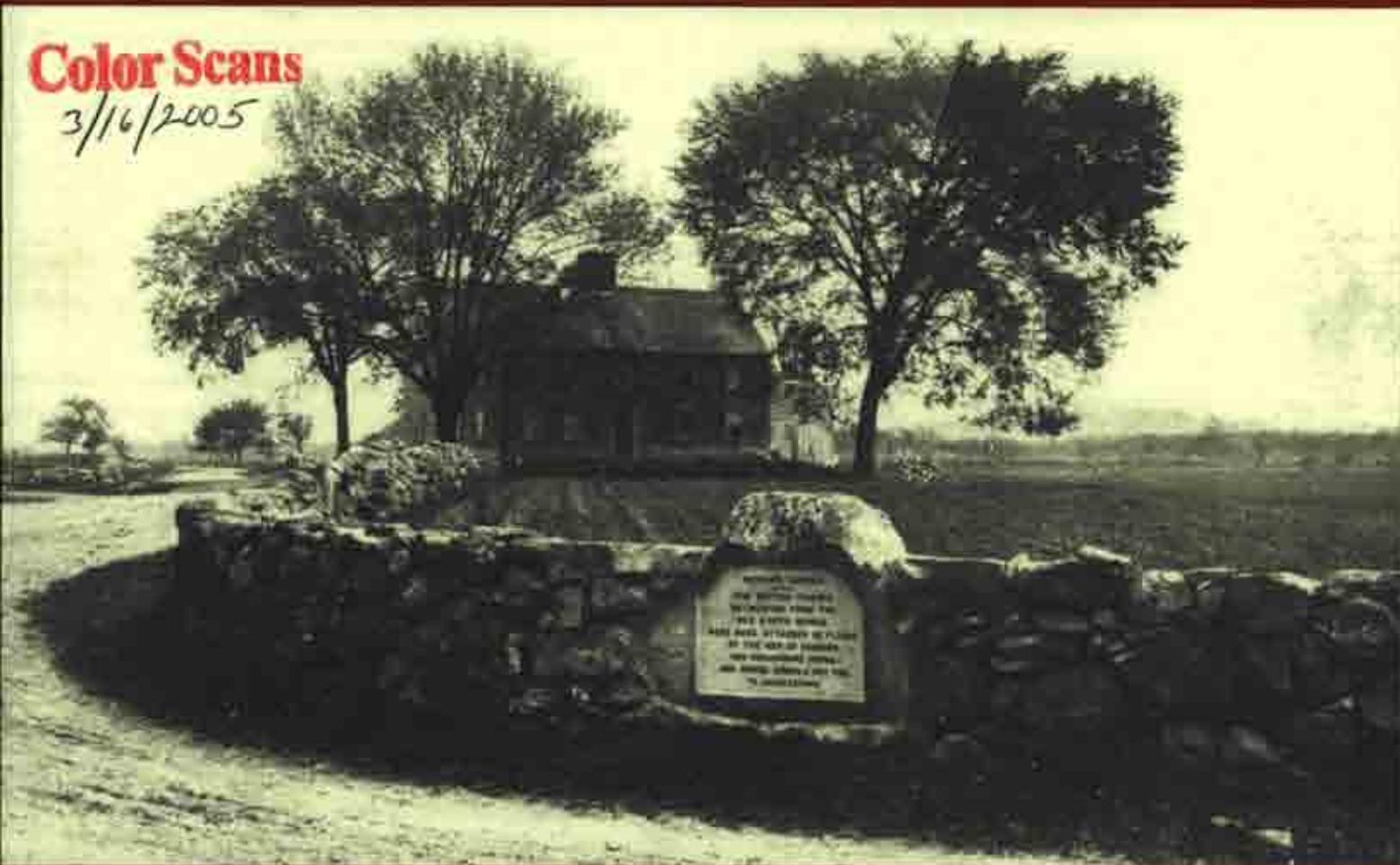


MERIAM HOUSE

Minute Man National Historical Park
Concord, Massachusetts

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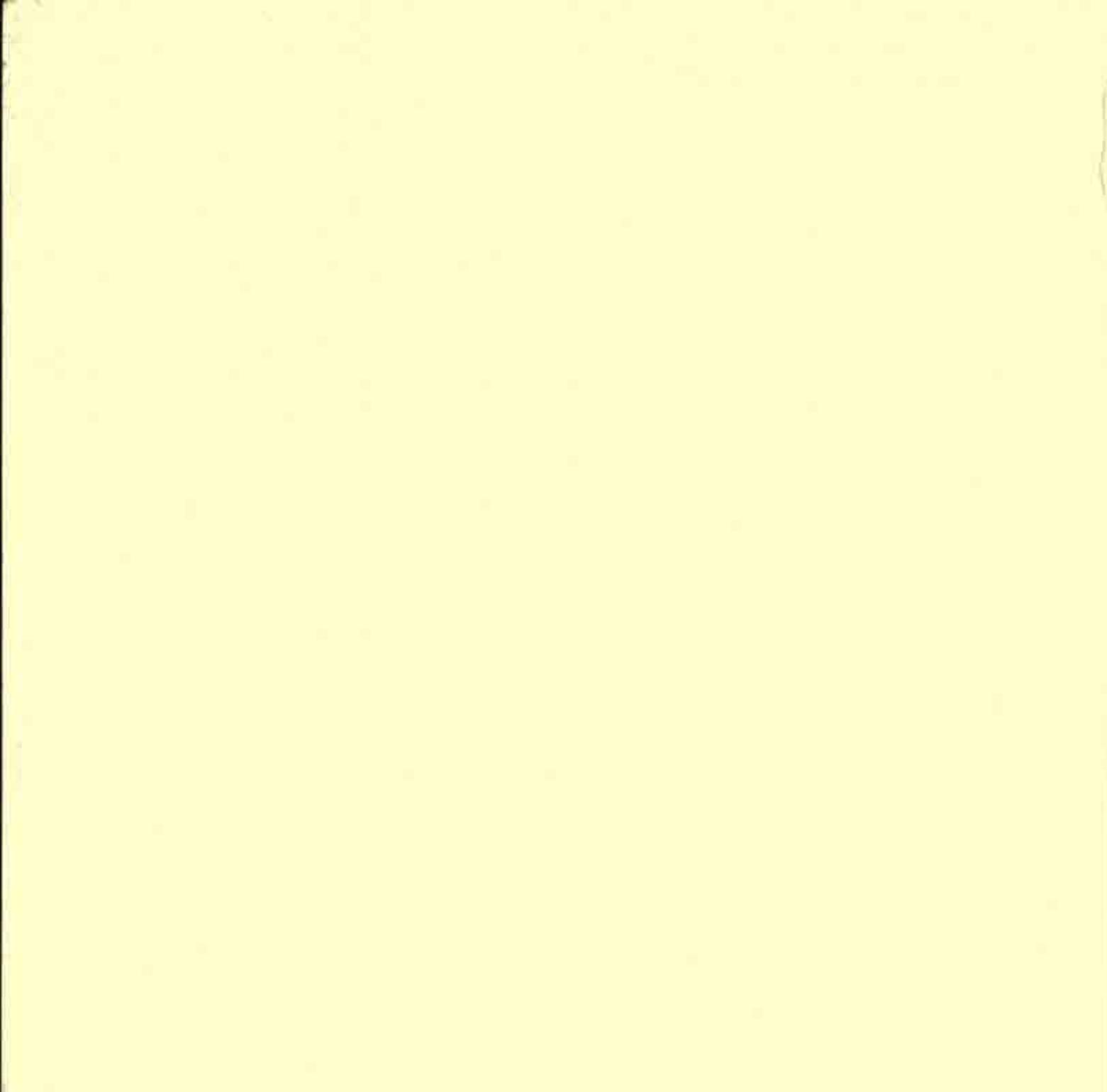
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Historic Structure Report



THE MERIAM HOUSE
HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

Minute Man National Historical Park
Concord, Massachusetts

By

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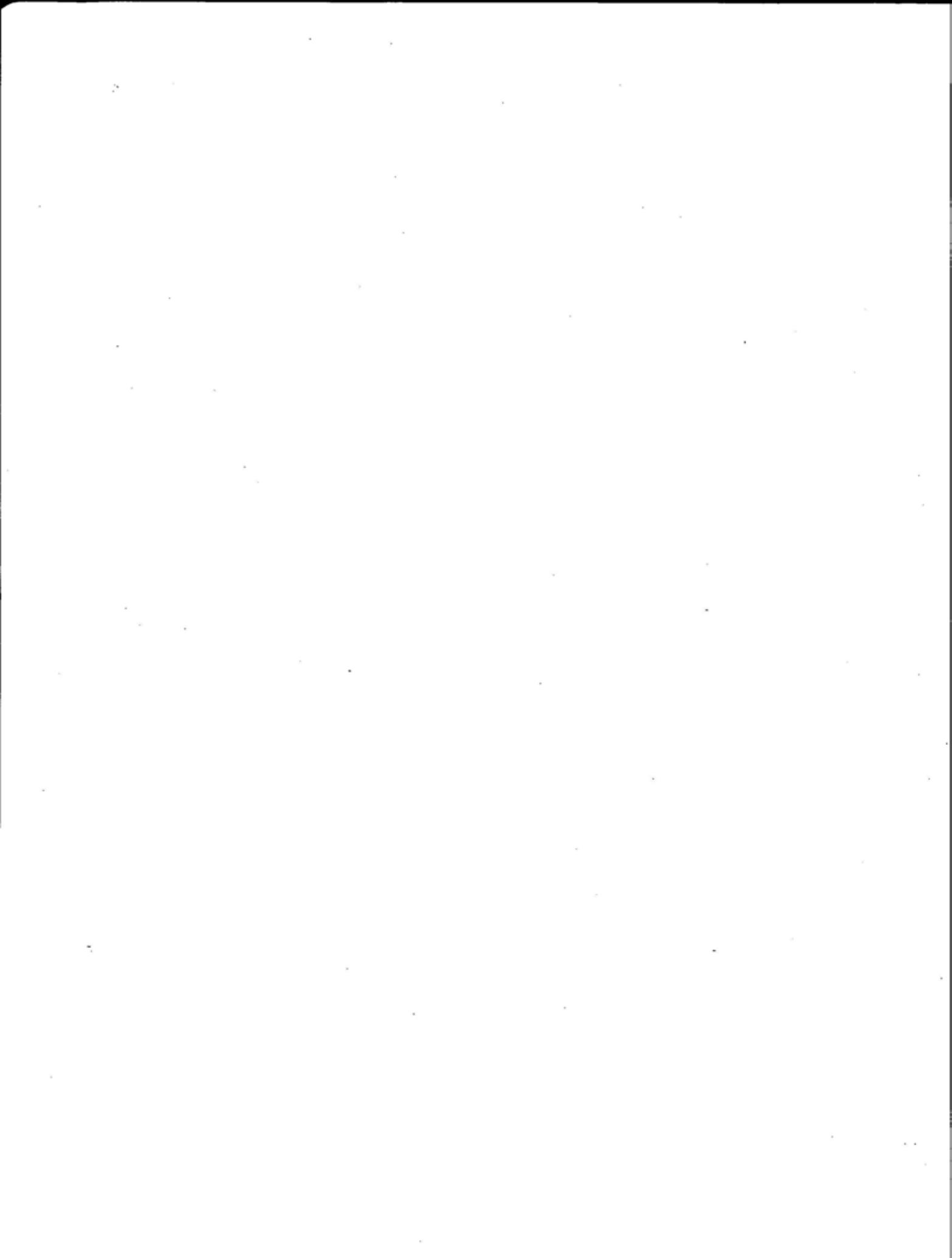


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Editor's Note:

At the time this report was written, the author was on the staff of the Building Conservation Branch (BCB) of the Cultural Resources Center (CRC), North Atlantic Region (NAR), National Park Service. Since that time, the North Atlantic Region has become part of the Northeast Region of the National Park Service, and the Cultural Resources Center has been disbanded. The staff of the BCB was divided into two entities, the Historic Architecture Program (HAP) and the Architectural Preservation Division (APD).

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PREFACE

The challenge of this historic structure report has been to separate the myths from the facts about the Meriam House property. It was recognized that several questions needed to be researched, which included the following:

- When, and by whom, was the house built?
- Were the house and its outbuildings mentioned in the contemporary documents of April 19, 1775?
- What did the house/site look like on that day, and where was Lexington Road located?
- How have the house and its outbuildings evolved over time, and what are the dates of the various architectural features?
- What is the existing physical condition of the house?
- What is the history of the "East Quarter Schoolhouse," located east of the Meriam House?
- Is there sufficient documentary and/or physical evidence to restore the exterior of the house to its appearance in 1775?
- What elements of the interior of the house merit preservation?

Preliminary research found that roughly eight different dates of construction, all antedating 1775, had been assigned to the Meriam House over the years. These are briefly listed below:

- 1639 This date was attributed by the last owners of the house, the Ingrahams, based on unspecified "evidence on the huge central chimney." (Source: *The Lexington-Concord Battle Road: Interim Report of the Boston National Historic Sites Commission to the Congress of the United States*; typescript, June 16, 1958, p. 167)
- Before 1660 "The house is one of Concord's most ancient.... [It was built] without question before 1660." (Source: *The Lexington-Concord Battle Road*; 1958, p. 167)
- Ca. 1663 "The old Meriam house was probably built in 1663 when John Meriam married Mary Cooper.... It was designated as a garrison house or a place for the neighborhood to assemble in case of an Indian attack at the time of King Phillip's War [1676]." (Source: *Our American Mile* by Ruth Wheeler, Concord Antiquarian Society, 1957, pp. 5-6)

- Ca. 1670 Date assigned by NPS Historical Architect Orville C. Carroll. (Source: NPS Memorandum dated May 28, 1970, regarding the "Maintenance Survey for Minute Man NHP")
- Ca. 1710 & Ca. 1730 Revised dates by Historical Architect Carroll. Mr. Carroll dated the east side of the house circa 1710, and the west side circa 1730, "based on a comparative study of chamfered summer beams in eastern Massachusetts." This comparative "study" was likely based on the personal observations of Mr. Carroll, which were unfortunately never published. (Source: NPS Memorandum dated March 22, 1988, regarding "Review of GMP Draft, MMNHP")
- Before 1750 An early history of Concord notes that there is too little knowledge of the house to make anything but passing mention, but notes that it "probably antedates 1750." (Source: *The History of Concord Mass., Vol. 1, Colonial Concord*, by A.S. Hudson, 1904, p. 312)
- 1750 Photographic caption entitled "House at Merriam's Corner...Built 1750." (Source: "Ancient Landmarks of the Old Bay State," Brown's Famous Pictures, No. 1471)
- 1752 This date is cited in an unpublished (handwritten) genealogical description of Dr. John Merriam (1758-1817) by Sidney Augustus Merriam (1881-1945). The specific quote reads, "The house at Concord built in 1752 on the land at 'Merriam's Corner' at the corner [of] Lexington and Billerica roads is still standing 1925. This land one and a half acres was owned by the first John Merriam in Concord born 1641 and perhaps by his father Joseph." (Source: Copy of genealogical manuscript, tracing the descendants of John Merriam,¹⁶ provided by Shirley Merriam Cornish, Woodgate, NY)

It was concluded after exhaustive research of the documentary sources and physical architectural fabric that two houses had existed at the Merriam's Corner site: one built by John Merriam circa 1663, and the other by his son Joseph circa 1705. Both houses and their barns were most likely standing in 1775. Of the two houses, only Joseph's house survives today, in considerably altered condition from its original construction. This is explained in detail in the report that follows.

INTRODUCTION

The report that follows is divided into six chapters. Chapter I is the "administrative data" section, which documents the significance of the house, National Park Service involvement, and proposed use and treatment. Chapter II is an "architectural history" that describes the evolution of the house and its site, from its original construction circa 1705 to the present time. Also described is an earlier Meriam house that is believed to have been located nearby on Lexington Road, which was also standing on April 19, 1775. Chapter III is an architectural description of the existing Meriam House, its outbuildings, and other buildings on the former Meriam farm. Chapter IV provides recommendations for the future treatment of the house. Chapter V contains the appendices, including a survey of existing maintenance conditions and recommendations for repairs. Chapter VI is a bibliography of sources.

This is a "Level I" historic structure report. A Level I investigation is defined as follows:

Exhaustive investigation of a structure or landscape through archeological, historical, or architectural means for the purpose of restoration or reconstruction. Such investigations shall be as complete as possible for uncovering all available details. This may entail the removal of certain portions of fabric and excavation.¹

Archival research of primary documents commenced in March 1993, and was accomplished by studying historic photographs, town records, tax assessment records, property deeds, population census records, probate records, and maps. In addition, several publications on the history of Concord were consulted, as were writings on the genealogy of the Meriam family. The research was carried out at the following institutions:

- Minute Man National Historical Park, Cultural Resources Center Library
- Concord Free Public Library, Special Collections
- Offices of the Town of Concord, including the Town Clerk, Tax Assessor's Office, and Building Department
- Boston Public Library
- Watertown Public Library
- Library of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities
- Registry of Deeds and Probate, Middlesex and Suffolk Counties
- The Massachusetts Archives at Columbia Point
- Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston
- New England Historical Genealogical Society, Boston
- National Archives and Records Service, Waltham Branch
- New England Antiquarian Society, Worcester

A detailed accounting of sources consulted may be found in the bibliography section of this report.

¹ NPS-28, *Technical Supplement*, Release 3, Chapter 5, p. 16.

An attempt was also made to contact and interview Meriam and Burke family members and close neighbors. These included the following people:

- Shirley Merriam Cornish, a descendant of John Meriam (1666-1748), of Woodgate, NY
- Alice Burke Hargrove, a granddaughter of Thomas and Rose Burke, of Concord, MA
- Gerard Burke, a grandson of Thomas and Rose Burke, of Concord, MA (no response)
- Salvatore Muscato, a neighbor on Old Bedford Road in Concord, MA
- Pauline B. Ingraham, second wife and widow of James Ingraham, of Yarmouth, ME

Transcripts of the interviews with Salvatore Muscato and Alice Burke Hargrove may be found in Appendix D of this report.

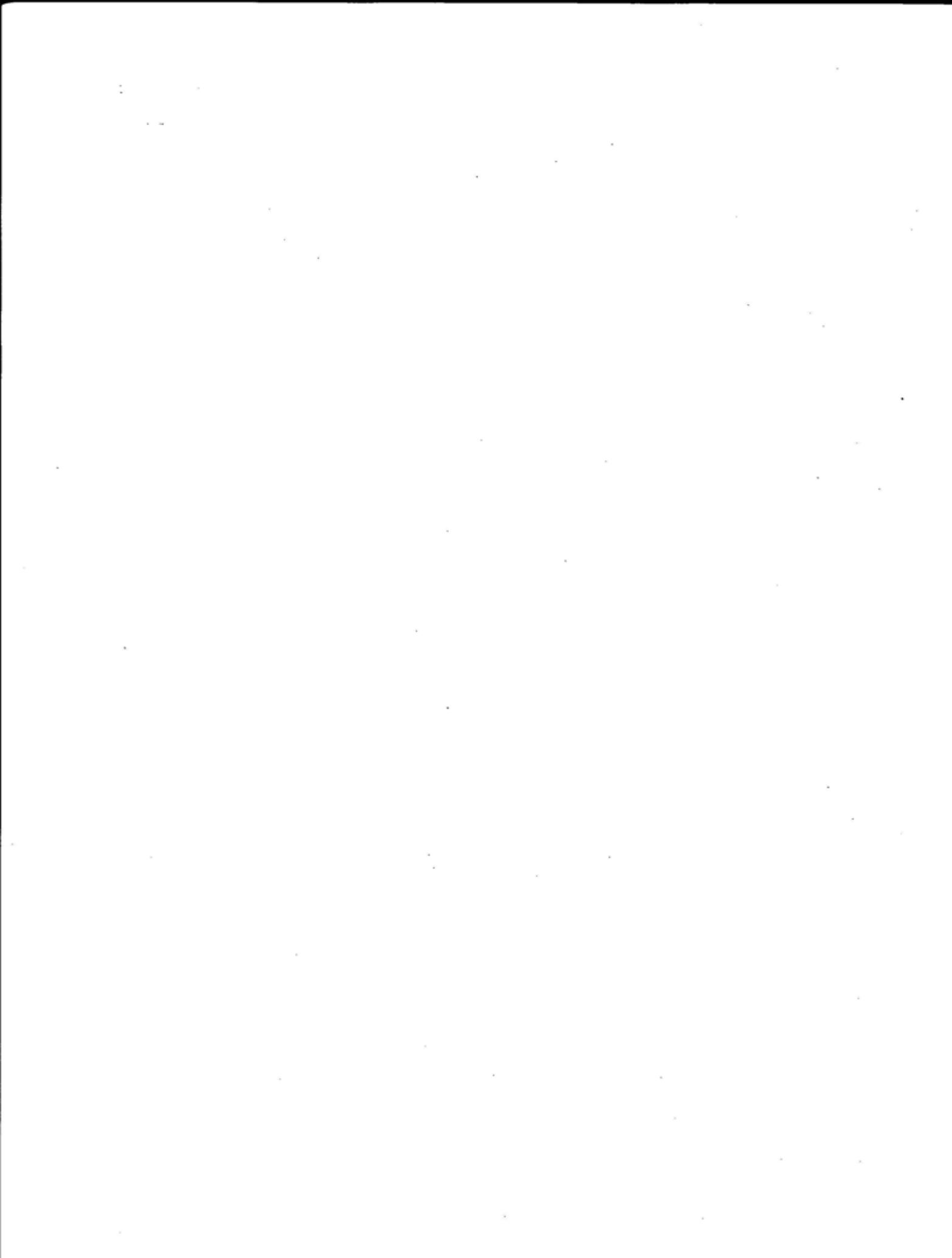
Recording and documentation of the existing structure was also in the scope of the historic structure report. It was found that one set of undated schematic architectural drawings already existed, which had been prepared by Minute Man NHP Ranger Dan Griffin. These included four exterior elevations, a cellar plan, first-floor plan, second-floor plan, and attic plan. Ranger Griffin had also annotated the floor plans to show electrical fixtures and wiring, and had identified the breaker switches at the electrical panel.

Measured architectural drawings (scaled at one-quarter inch to the foot) were subsequently prepared in March 1993 by a group of students from Boston University for the class "Documenting Historic Structures." They included exterior drawings of the front and west elevations, a first-floor plan, and a second-floor plan. Detailed elevations of three interior walls were also made, scaled at one-half inch to the foot.

Investigation and recording of the physical structure by this author was carried out in August, September, and October 1993. First, the rooms were assigned numbers 101 through 108 in the first story, and 201 through 209 in the second story, so as to standardize site notes. Then, scale drawings were prepared of the four walls, floor, and ceiling (scaled at one-half inch to the foot) of each room in the first and second stories (excluding the garage). Significant physical features were recorded on the drawings, as were the locations of paint samples extracted for the paint analysis.

Two other studies on the Meriam House site were carried out concurrently with the architectural investigation: a cultural landscape study (by Historian Brian Donahue) and an NPS archeology study. The results of these studies are presented in separate reports.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA



The Meriam House is a residential structure located at 34 Old Bedford Road in Concord, Massachusetts. It is a two-story frame dwelling, with attached garage, on a 1.77-acre site. The site is significant for being the location where "the British rear guard and the Americans exchanged shots, beginning a running fight that continued all the way back to Lexington" on April 19, 1775.¹ This was one of a series of events on that day that led to the American War for Independence.

The Meriam House is the only historic structure standing in the area known today as "Merriam's Corner."² Such was not the case in 1775, when this part of town was densely built up with houses, barns, and shops. Three Meriam dwellings were located here in 1775, belonging to Nathan Meriam (the Meriam House), his brother Josiah (on Lexington Road), and their nephew John (on the west side of Old Bedford Road).

The Meriam family made significant contributions to the cause for American Independence. Nathan was then one of three Town Selectmen, which position he held from March 1774 to March 1779. Family history identifies Josiah as a sergeant in Captain Joseph Hosmer's company of Minute Men, and his son Josiah, Jr., as a private in the same company. Josiah was also later appointed as one of seven members of the Committee of Safety, Correspondence and Inspections, from March 1777 to March 1783. Nephew John Meriam's involvement, if any, is undocumented.

The Meriam House has been owned by only three families since its original construction by Nathan Meriam's father, Joseph Meriam, circa 1705. The Meriam family lived here for four generations, until the death of Rufus Meriam in 1870. Two generations of the Burke family next owned it—first residing there, then renting it to tenants—until 1951. The last family, James and Margaret Ingraham, owned the property until 1987.

Formal recognition of the significance of the Meriam House site was first bestowed in 1885, as part of the 250th-anniversary celebration of settlement of the Town of Concord. Several memorials were erected at that time, including a stone at Meriam's Corner, which bears the following inscription:

MERIAM'S CORNER

—
THE BRITISH TROOPS
RETREATING FROM THE
OLD NORTH BRIDGE
WERE HERE ATTACKED IN FLANK
BY THE MEN OF CONCORD
AND NEIGHBORING TOWNS
AND DRIVEN UNDER A HOT FIRE
TO CHARLESTOWN

¹ *General Management Plan: Minute Man National Historical Park*, September 1989, p. 12.

² The first reference to "Merriam's Corner" is dated 1797.

All known photographs of the house postdate the installation of this commemorative stone at the corner of Lexington and Old Bedford Roads.

The earliest-known attempt to preserve the house was initiated in 1938 by William Sumner Appleton, who was then the Corresponding Secretary of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Appleton, who was a great-great grandson of Joseph Meriam (1677-1750),³ wrote to attorney John H. Merriam of Boston regarding the prospect of acquiring the house for the Society.⁴ Merriam's response was that "other matters demand my attention and money in a more urgent way." Appleton wrote back, "I feel just as strongly that this particular building is worthy of preservation not only for itself but also because of the furious fighting that took place in its vicinity on that hot spring day in 1775." He closed his letter with the invitation, "let us have a talk about it in order to find out what might be done to ensure the preservation of this historic site." No action, however, appears to have been taken.⁵

Minute Man National Historical Park was established by Act of Congress on September 21, 1959. Although the Meriam House was then in private ownership, it was designated as being within park boundaries, and therefore eligible for acquisition by the Secretary of the Interior.

The Historic American Buildings Survey recorded the house with one black-and-white photograph on February 9, 1963. Three years later, in 1966, the house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing structure in a multiple resource nomination entitled "Minute Man National Historical Park."⁶

The property, identified as tract number 04-106, was finally acquired by the U.S. government by condemnation in 1987, for which the owners were compensated \$600,000 and allowed life estate. The house has been unoccupied and unheated since 1990, when the Ingrahams moved to Maine. The government became sole owner in December 1991, upon the death of Mr. Ingraham.

The National Park Service's List of Classified Structures identifies the Meriam House as being structure number "04," and management category "Ib." A category "Ib" structure is one "that does not possess national significance on an individual basis but contributes to the national significance of a park or historic district."⁷

³ Joseph Meriam, a locksmith, is believed to have been the original builder of the Meriam House circa 1705.

⁴ John H. Merriam was also a direct descendant of Joseph Meriam (1677-1750).

⁵ "MA: Concord, Antiquarian Society," letters dated August 18 and 19, 1938; Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities microfiche.

⁶ The HABS photograph is in the Library of Congress, where it is cataloged as MASS-9-CON, 17-1. The National Register nomination was accepted October 15, 1966, and is cataloged as number 66000935.

⁷ NPS-28, Draft Release 4 (Feb. 1993), p. 126.

The General Management Plan (GMP) for the park, dated September 1989, proposes to restore the exterior of the house and adapt (i.e., rehabilitate) the interior for administrative use. The target restoration date is identified by the GMP to be April 19, 1775. The National Park Service defines "restoration" and "rehabilitation" as follows:

Restoration reestablishes the form, features and character of a historic structure at a particular past period.... Management Policies permits restoration only if (a) it is essential for the public understanding of the cultural associations of a park and (b) it can be accomplished with minimal conjecture.

Rehabilitation maintains the existing integrity and character of a historic structure but allows major additions or alterations to accommodate a compatible contemporary use.⁸

More detailed plans for the development of the Meriam's Corner site are also provided by the GMP:

A centralized parking lot for 20 cars and 2 buses will be established and screened in a previously developed area, the Willow Pond Restaurant site, for access to Meriam's Corner (with expansion potential for possible future demand).

A wayside pull off for three cars will be installed on the south side of Lexington Road for interpretation of Meriam's Corner.

A trail will be provided on the north to interpret the Americans' route across the fields from the fighting at Meriam's Corner to the Bloody Angles where the most intensive fighting occurred within the park....

Stone walls will be rebuilt at the intersection of Old Bedford and Lexington roads to improve visitor safety when experiencing Meriam's Corner.

A segment of The Battle Road in front of the Meriam House (believed to be in the front yard) will be located and restored when the site becomes accessible. In addition, a crossing of Mill Brook will be provided at the historic location to improve interpretation of the beginning of the running battle, which continued from this area all the way to Boston.

The exterior of the John [sic] Meriam House and surrounding landscape on NPS property will be restored for interpretation. The exterior of the East Quarter Schoolhouse will be restored for orientation and interpretive purposes.⁹

⁸ NPS-28, Draft Release 4 (Feb. 1993), pp. 132-133.

⁹ *General Management Plan*, pp. 45-46. The existing "schoolhouse" was built in 1853 and remodeled as a house in 1903-1904.

It is the recommendation of this report that the exterior of the Meriam House not be restored to its 1775 appearance. This would require the demolition of the circa-1810, 1 1/2-story back addition and the attached garage/carriage shed. Furthermore, there is insufficient evidence—either documentary or physical—to recreate the exterior appearance of the house in 1775. The house as it exists today is little changed from its 1820 appearance, with the exception of a back dormer added circa 1925, and several first-story windows (mostly in the rear) altered in the 1950's.

The alternate recommended treatment of the exterior is "preservation," which is defined as follows:

Preservation as an ultimate treatment maintains the existing integrity and character of a historic structure. This alternative precludes uses that would require major additions or demolition. It should always receive first consideration.¹⁰

Rehabilitation of the interior for administrative use is an acceptable alternative, providing that existing architectural fabric is not removed or destroyed.

¹⁰ NPS-28, Draft Release 4 (Feb. 1993), p. 132.

II. ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The history of the Meriam House and its site reflects the general history and development of the Town of Concord where it is located. The earliest-recorded owner of the land was John Meriam, whose father had immigrated from England to Concord in 1639. John Meriam's son, Joseph, a locksmith and farmer, is believed to have built circa 1705 the house that is standing today. It was Joseph's son Nathan, then a town selectman, who was living in the house with his family on that fateful day of April 19, 1775. The house remained in the Meriam family for almost 100 years after 1775, until the death of Rufus Meriam in 1870.

The spelling of the "Meriam" family name has changed over the years. The most common spelling found in 17th-century documents is "Miriam,"¹ although "Marion" was also observed in a deed dated 1667. Tax assessment records for the years 1717 through 1857 record the name as "Meriam," which spelling is used in this report. The modern spelling of "Merriam" first appears in the tax record for 1858, and then not again until 1862. The use of the two "r's" is found consistently in the tax records and other documents dated 1862 and later.

The next owners of the house were Thomas and Rose Burke, immigrants from Ireland, who purchased the property in 1871. They maintained the house, built a new barn, and continued to farm the land. The house was leased to tenants during the second generation of Burke-family ownership, 1922-1951. A fire in the house in 1925 resulted in alterations that remain today.

The last family to own the property was James and Margaret Ingraham. James Ingraham was not a farmer, but worked as an architectural engineer for Harvard University. It was he who undertook an extensive restoration of the house in the 1950's, which resulted in the appearance of the house today.

The property was taken by condemnation by the U.S. government in 1987 to become part of Minute Man National Historical Park, established in 1959. Mr. Ingraham, who retained life tenancy, died in 1991.

The Meriam House is located in the East Quarter of Concord at Meriam's Corner, near the intersection of Lexington and Old Bedford Roads. The "East Quarter" was so-named in 1653, when the town was divided into three parts (or "quarters"), so as to simplify the distribution of new lands in what was called the "second division."² Exactly when "Meriam's Corner" was so-named is not known for certain, although there is little doubt that John Meriam was living in the area by 1666. The earliest documented reference to the name is in the records of a town meeting held on May 1,

¹ Joseph Miriam's will and inventory dated 1640, and John Miriam's property description dated 1666.

² Charles Hosmer Walcott, *Concord in the Colonial Period* (Boston: Estes & Lauriat, 1884), pp. 18-19, 68 & 71.

1797, when it was decided to build the new East district schoolhouse, "at or near the place called Meriam's corner."³

Lexington and Old Bedford Roads are both old roads dating back to the 17th century. Their names, however, have changed over the years, as evidenced by property deeds, maps and tax records, and other documents.⁴ In 1666, Lexington Road was called the "Bay Way," and Old Bedford Road was the "Way to Billerica." In the 18th century, Lexington Road was usually referred to as the "Bay Road" or "County Road," and Old Bedford Road was "Billerica Road" or "Bedford Road."⁵ A map dated 1830 used "Lexington & Boston Road" and "Bedford Road," although 19th-century property deeds continued with the earlier "County Road" or "the Great County road" appellations. "Lexington Road" was officially so-named in 1899; it had been declared a state road the previous year, in 1898. The first reference to "Old Bedford Road" is in the Town Directory for 1886.

³ "Town of Concord, Vol. 6, Records of the Selectmen & Town Meetings, 1790-1814," entry for May 1, 1797, pp. 119-120.

⁴ Middlesex County Property Deeds dated 1666 (Book 10, p. 525); 1698 (Book 25, p. 373); 1745 (Book 45, p. 345); 1747 (Book 49, p. 260); 1788 (Book 158, p. 163); 1803 (Book 158, p. 166); 1826 (Book 267, p. 156); 1834 (Book 1,160, p. 21); 1871 (Book 1,164, p. 448); 1922 (Book 4,569, p. 384); and 1951 (Book 7703, p. 584). Also, John G. Hales Map of Concord, 1830; Property Taxes for the Town of Concord dated 1891 (the first year when road names are given) through 1977; Town Records for June 6, 1685 (Vol. 1, pp. 68-69) and Nov. 13, 1716 (Vol II., p. 95); and Town Directories (beginning with 1886).

⁵ "County Road" and "Bedford Road" were both mentioned in a document dated March 5, 1775, in which the Selectmen for the Town of Concord apportioned the roads to the "highway surveyors." CFPL.

MERIAM FAMILY OWNERSHIP

The Meriam family owned the property on which the Meriam House sits for five generations: from circa 1663 to 1870. John Meriam is believed to have built the first house at the Meriam's Corner site circa 1663. A second house, known as the Meriam House today, is thought to have been constructed by his son Joseph circa 1705.

Early Concord Family

Joseph Meriam's House, Circa 1638

Joseph and Sarah Meriam are the progenitors of all the Meriam descendants in Concord. Joseph was a clothier, as had been his father, in the county of Kent, England. He sailed to New England on the *Castle of London*, which arrived in the port of Charlestown in July 1638.⁶ Shortly after, he settled in the Town of Concord, which had been recently established in 1635. He became a freeman of the Massachusetts Bay Colony on March 14, 1639.

Joseph Meriam did not live long in his new home of Concord, for he died on January 1, 1641. His will, dated October 29, 1640, specified the following about the disposition of his estate, including his house:

...Item I give & bequeath to Sarah my wife all my whole estate towards and for the bringing up of all my children; & I do give to the said Sarah my wife power and authority to sell my house that I now dwell in if God shall offer such an opportunity it being larger and bigger than she shall stand in need of: and that the overplus of providing a lesse house shalbe disposed in some way for the good & benefit of my wife & children.... And my will & mind is that if the said Sarah my wife shall marry againe that then my estate shall be prised: & valued & the said Sarah my wife shall have the third wholly to her selfe; the rest of my estate shalbe for my children, & the increase of that shalbe for the bringing up of them up untill my sonne William shall come to one & twenty yeares, & then he shall have his portion... & then the rest of my estate both principall & increase shalbe preserved for my other children I conceiving they then being sufficient to live of themselves....⁷

⁶ It is not known for certain if Sarah sailed with Joseph or arrived at a later date.

⁷ Microfilm entitled "Suffolk Probate Court Record Books, Vol. 1. p. 1, to Vol. 4, p. 213," Vol. 1, pp. 13-15 (in the Boston Public Library); the will is also transcribed on pp. 35-36 of *Merriam Genealogy, In England and America*, compiled by Charles Henry Pope (Boston: Charles H. Pope, 1906).

An inventory was made of Joseph Meriam's estate on January 18, 1641, which was assigned a total value of 51 pounds 10 shillings. It is a detailed listing that includes the stock of Joseph's clothing business, furnishings, cooking utensils, dishes, tools, and livestock. No descriptions of the house or the rooms within the house are provided.⁸

Exactly where Joseph and Sarah Meriam's house was located is not known for certain. There is a good possibility that it was in town, on the street now known as Walden Street. This was the location of the house lots of Joseph's two brothers, Robert and George, according to town records dated 1666.⁹ Records of land transactions prior to 1663, when the town decided to "transcribe...every man's land in a new booke...", are unfortunately scarce, with no mention of Joseph Meriam's holdings.¹⁰

Ruth Wheeler, the late Concord historian, identified Joseph Meriam's house lot as being at the southwest corner of modern-day Walden and Heywood Streets. Wheeler states in an unpublished paper that this property... "was part of the original town grant of a twenty-acre house lot to Joseph Meriam." She also indicates on a map made in 1967, entitled "Seventeenth Century Settlers," that the property was conveyed from original settler Richard Griffin to Joseph Meriam. Unfortunately, no citations are given for these transactions, and a search through the early town records and deeds found no supporting documentation for Wheeler's conclusions.¹¹

It has also been proposed that Joseph Meriam's house is the Meriam House at Meriam's Corner.¹² This is improbable, however, due to the fact that the house is located slightly more than one mile from the town center. Concord historian Lemuel Shattuck has cited a General Court order

⁸ Microfilm at Boston Public Library entitled "Suffolk Probate Court Record Books, Vol. 1, p. 1 to Vol. 4, p. 213 (1636 - 1664)." These volumes are an 1892 transcription of an earlier copy made in 1752. The inventory appears on pp. 17-20 of Volume 2.

⁹ Microfilm entitled, "Town of Concord, Mass., Vol. 1, Relating to Land Divisions, Highways & Bridges, 1655-1784," pp. 185 and 216. The locations of the two brothers are illustrated in a map by Ruth R. Wheeler entitled "Seventeenth Century Settlers," which appears in her book *Concord: Climate for Freedom* (Concord: The Concord Antiquarian Society, 1967). The *Merriam Genealogy* by Pope says that Robert Meriam came to New England in 1638, and became a freeman March 13, 1639. He first settled in Charlestown, but later moved to Concord. George Meriam is believed to have come to New England after Joseph Meriam's will was made in 1640, because he was not mentioned in it, as was his brother Robert. He was definitely here the following year, since he was made a freeman June 2, 1641.

¹⁰ Lemuel Shattuck states, in *A History of the Town of Concord; Middlesex County, Massachusetts, From Its Earliest Settlement to 1832* (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; and Concord: John Stacy; 1835), that "A tradition has prevailed in Concord, that the early records of the town were burnt; and this is said to have taken place when part of the first settlers removed to Connecticut [in 1644]" (p. iv).

¹¹ Wheeler's unpublished paper is in a file labeled "W 6" in the Concord Free Public Library, Special Collections. The map appears as the frontispiece in her book *Climate for Freedom*.

¹² This claim was made by the most recent owner of the house, Mr. James Ingraham, who said that "evidence on the huge central chimney points to a date of origin not later than 1639." *The Lexington-Concord Battle Road: Interim Report of the Boston National Historic Sites Commission to the Congress of the United States*, p. 167.

dated 1635, which decreed that “no new building should be built more than half a mile from the meeting-house in any new plantation.” Shattuck says that the order appears to have been enforced in Concord for about eight years, after which the settlement began to be much more extended.”¹³

Whether or not Joseph Meriam’s widow, Sarah, sold the large house as was suggested in the will is not known. It is known that Sarah married Lieutenant Joseph Wheeler a short time after Joseph’s death, in 1641 or 1642.¹⁴ No evidence has been found that the estate was “prised” [i.e., appraised] at that time, as was also specified in the will. It does appear, however, that Lieutenant Joseph Wheeler purchased the shares of the estate inherited by Joseph Meriam’s sons. This transaction was officially recorded in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds on April 17, 1667, as a quit claim in which the three Meriam sons (William, Joseph, and John) conveyed unto Joseph Wheeler all “our shares, parts, rights, titles & interests of and unto the housing lands & estate of our father Joseph Meriaon [sic] late of Concord, lying & being in or about the Town of Concord.”¹⁵

The quit claim further allowed “that it shall be lawful...for him the sd Joseph Wheeler to enter, enrol, & record [his holdings]...in any book of records within the Massachusetts Colony in New England aforesaid at his pleasure.”¹⁶ Since no holdings of Joseph Wheeler were recorded about this time or shortly after, it is possible that the quit claim gave legitimacy to the land holdings recorded by Joseph Wheeler the previous year, on October 26, 1666. This describes Lieutenant Joseph Wheeler’s house lot as being 20 acres, and located at the present-day corner of Walden and Heywood Streets.¹⁷ We can only speculate as to whether or not this was the former house lot of the late Joseph Meriam. Whatever the case, the old 17th-century house is no longer standing in this location today.

John Meriam’s House, Circa 1663

John Meriam was the youngest son of Joseph and Sarah Meriam, being born on July 9, 1641, after his father’s death. Of Joseph and Sarah’s seven children, he was the only child not born in England, the home country of the Meriams.

¹³ Shattuck, p. 9.

¹⁴ Sarah and Joseph had two children: Mary, who was born and died on September 20, 1643; and Rebecca, born September 6, 1645. [Source: *The Wheeler Families of Old Concord, Mass*, compiled by George Tolman, 1908, in the CFPL.]

¹⁵ Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Book 9, pp. 259-262.

¹⁶ See footnote 15.

¹⁷ Microfilm of Concord Town Records, Vol. I, p. 204.

It is of interest to note that Joseph Meriam made provision for his unborn child in his will dated October 29, 1640, as follows:

...And funder my will & mind is, that if my wife be with child; that then none of my children shall have any increase of my stock preserved for them, but according as they come to age they shall receive their portions as aforesaid: & the increase of the stock still undivided shall go for the bringing up of the yonge one....¹⁸

John Meriam married Mary Cooper on October 21, 1663. He may have been given land at that time by his stepfather, Lieutenant Joseph Wheeler, on which to start his own homestead.¹⁹ John Meriam's land holdings were recorded on October 26, 1666, and transcribed in 1696 as follows:

Transcript of the Lands of Jn Miriam Senr. 26: 10:1666: John Miriam. Impr. His house Lott one acre and ahalfe: bounded upon the South by ye Bay way, upon the West by ye way to Billerica, upon the North by Nathaniel Stowe.

It: Fifteen acres of medow in Elme Brook medow...

It: Sixteen acres within Crane ffeild...

It: Twenty acres of Upland near Crane ffeild...

It: Three acres of medow in the Great River Medow...

It: Sixteen acres of Swamy Land near Virginia Swamp...

It: Second Division Land, nine acres...

It: His due yet to Lay out ninety one acres...

Feb. 14: 1672: Then was Granted unto ye sd John Miriam ye ninety one acres of Land due to him, adjoining Nathaniel Stows Land....²⁰

¹⁸ Microfilm entitled, "Suffolk Probate Court Record Books, Vol. 1. p. 1, to Vol. 4, p. 213," Vol. 1, pp. 13-15 (in the Boston Public Library); the will is also transcribed on pp. 35-36 of the *Merriam Genealogy* by Pope.

¹⁹ As mentioned in the previous section, the three sons of Joseph Meriam appear to have conveyed their rights to the estate of their deceased father Joseph Meriam; the transaction was recorded officially in 1667. See Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Book 9, pp. 259-262.

²⁰ Microfilm entitled "Town of Concord, Mass: Vol. 1, Relating to Land Divisions Highways & Bridges, 1655-1784," p. 204; also Middlesex County Deed Book 10, p. 525, dated November 2, 1696; also transcribed in Pope's *Merriam Genealogy*, pp. 46-47.

John Meriam's house lot was situated at modern-day Meriam's Corner, being bounded by the "Bay Way" (now Lexington Road) and the "Way to Billerica" (now Old Bedford Road). While it is possible that no house existed on the "house Lott" in 1666, it is generally thought that one was probably standing by this time. A likely date of construction would have been 1663, when John Meriam and Mary Cooper were wed.

Whether or not John Meriam's house was fortified as a "garrison house" during King Philip's War (in 1676) is not known for certain. Local historian Lemuel Shattuck wrote the following about the garrison houses in 1835:

The government ordered that garrison-houses should be erected in the several towns, or that dwelling-houses already built should be fortified, which were to serve as a kind of fortress into which the inhabitants, by districts or companies, might collect at night, or in case of an attack....

We have no other means than tradition to ascertain the number or situation of the garrison-houses in Concord.... [One stood] near Meriam's corner....²¹

The earliest specific reference to John Meriam's house is found in an entry in the Town Records dated June 6, 1685:

We whoes names are written being appoynted by the Selectmen of Concord to lay out a way from Billericka Road neare **John Meriams house** [bold added] cross the field to another way that is laid out neare the great medow side, have accordingly laid out said way, beginning at John Miriams orch and through Jos. French his land formerly Mr. Bulkeleys, running northward 3 rods wide till it comes to the north end of the spruce swamp....

James Blood
John Wheeler
Edmond Wigley²²

This unpaved lane exists today, opposite the extant Meriam House on Old Bedford Road.

The initial interpretation of this entry was that "John Meriams house" must have been the existing Meriam House, based on its proximity to the old lane. Additional information suggests, however, that the house mentioned in 1685 was in fact located a short distance away on the Bay Way (known as Lexington Road today).

²¹ Shattuck, p. 47. Another local historian, Ruth R. Wheeler, later conjectured that the existing Meriam House was in fact the house "designated a block house in King Philip's War," based on the thickness of the walls in the east parlor. [See Wheeler, *Our American Mile* (Concord: Concord Antiquarian Society, 1957), p. 6, and *Concord: Climate for Freedom*, caption p. 126.] It was determined during the investigation for this historic structure report, however, that the walls in the east parlor are hollow, having been furred out prior to plastering. In addition, it appears that the existing house was built at a later date, circa 1705.

²² Microfilm entitled "Town of Concord, Mass: Vol. 1, Relating to Land Divisions Highways & Bridges, 1655-1784," pp. 268-269 (in the CFPL, Special Collections).

This information was found in a report to the American Antiquarian Society by John McKinstry Merriam, published in April 1894. Merriam wrote the following about the houses at Meriam's Corner:

At the time of the Revolution there were three Meriam houses at this corner, one of which, the Ephraim Meriam house, on the Bedford road, is standing to-day. **An older house** [bold added], which was occupied by my father's grandfather, Josiah Meriam, was located on the Lexington road, about the same distance from the junction of the roads as is the existing house. All traces of this house have disappeared, but its location was pointed out to me by my father [Adolphus Merriam, 1820-1888] a short time before he died.²³

This "older house" may well have been the dwelling constructed by John Meriam circa 1663. It was apparently still standing in 1775; early 19th-century documents suggest that this early house and its barn were removed sometime between 1805 and 1826.²⁴

Development of Meriam's Corner

The Children of John and Mary Meriam

John Meriam and Mary Cooper, who were married in 1663, had five sons and one daughter between the years 1666 and 1681. Of the sons, three settled nearby at Meriam's Corner.²⁵ These were John (1666-1748), Ebenezer (circa 1675-1777) and Joseph (1677-1750).

The house lot of the eldest son, John, contained 6 acres and was located on the west side of the Way to Billerica (now Old Bedford Road). When John later moved to Littleton and the property was conveyed to Joseph Baker in 1737, a house and a barn were then on the house lot.²⁶ These may have been constructed originally around 1691, when John married Sarah Wheeler. The property had been most likely given to John by his father, although no records of this transaction have been found.

²³ "Concord," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, Vol. 9, April 1894, p. 260; also excerpted in Pope, pp. 463-464.

²⁴ The 1805 inventory of a later John Meriam, who died October 15, 1804, refers to the "house barn & land lately purchased of Josiah Meriam, \$400" [Middlesex County Probate document #15076]. A later deed dated 1826 conveys the property from Tarrant to Ephraim Meriam for only \$175 [Middlesex County Deed, Book 267, p. 156].

²⁵ The first documented reference to the place name "Meriam's Corner" dates from 1797. Exactly when the area was so-named is not known.

²⁶ Middlesex County Deed Book 39, p. 57, dated Feb. 24, 1736-1737.

Ebenezer, who married the first of his five wives in December 1705, is believed to have lived in the old homestead on the Bay Road (now Lexington Road) with his parents.²⁷ Confirmation that Ebenezer's house was on the Bay Road is provided by a "Survey of the Highways" recorded in the town records on November 13, 1716. This survey noted that the Bay Road from Potters Lane (in town) to "the Meriams" was 4 rods wide, and from "the Meriams" to Elm Brook (towards Lexington) was 8 rods wide. Furthermore, the point where the road widened was described as being, "From the end of the ditch at the corner of Nathaniel Ball's meadow, near Ebenezer Meriam's House on the north, to the ditch against ye Meriam's meadow south." In other words, Ebenezer's house was on the north side of the road, not far from Nathaniel Ball's meadow (which is known from the property records to be close to Meriam's Corner).²⁸

Joseph, the next youngest son, married Dorothy Brooks on March 24, 1705. It is likely that property was also given to Joseph by his father, which would have included a house lot. Such a conveyance may have been made when Joseph reached his majority (the age of 21) in 1698; his house, on the other hand, was probably not built until around 1705, the time of Joseph's marriage. Again, unfortunately, no documentation of the land transaction or the house construction exists.²⁹

The three Meriam brothers were listed, one after the other, in the earliest tax records for the east part of town dated 1717. Tax valuations were not listed in alphabetical order in Concord until 1750; rather, they were in the order in which the tax assessor visited the house, thereby providing valuable information on the relative locations of households. In the case of the Meriam brothers, Ebenezer appears to have been closest to town, with Joseph the next brother up the road, followed by John. The valuations for 1717 were as follows:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>VALUE OF REAL ESTATE</u>	<u>PERSONAL ESTATE</u>
Ebenezer Meriam	6 pounds	1 horse, 2 oxen, 4 cows
Joseph Meriam	7 pounds, 10 shillings	1 horse, 6 cows
John Meriam	9 pounds	1 horse, 2 oxen, 4 cows

²⁷ Father John Meriam lived until February 2, 1724, and mother Mary until 1730.

²⁸ Middlesex County Deed dated May 8, 1698 (Book 25, p. 373), conveyed this 4-acre meadow from Bethiah Ball to Nathaniel Ball, Jr. The bounds were then described as being "South on the County [i.e., Bay] Road, West by John Meriam Sr. (bold added), North on Samuel Fletcher, and East on Captain James Minot."

²⁹ Joseph also later became the owner of the old house and barn that had been occupied by Ebenezer, which he conveyed in 1747 to his son Josiah. No documentation of the conveyance from Ebenezer to Joseph has been found, however.

Joseph Meriam's House, Circa 1705

As explained in the previous section, Joseph Meriam is thought to have built his house near his brothers John and Ebenezer around 1705. The three brothers each appear to have had separate households by 1717, based on the tax assessment for that year. It also appears that Joseph's house was the one known today as the Meriam House, based on its location as specified in later deeds. In addition, the early architectural features of the Meriam House fit a construction date of circa 1705. Of the three Meriam houses, it is the only one standing today.

The scarce documentary evidence suggests that Joseph Meriam built his house for his immediate family only. This may explain why the house was smaller when it was first built than it is today. The architectural investigation of the Meriam House determined that the original house was two stories high on the east side and one story on the west side.³⁰ It was of post-and-beam construction, with raised sills visible in the rooms of the first story. The framing of the ceiling was also visible, with the summer beams and chimney girts finished with decorative chamfering. Wide-board wood paneling appears to have finished the walls, and the undersides of floorboards formed the ceiling above. Typical of this time period would have been large fireplace openings, with a bake oven tucked in the back corner on one side of the cooking fireplace.

The interior room configuration consisted of two large rooms in the first story connected by a small stair hall, and one large room in the second story off the stair hall. The two first- and second-story rooms on the east side of the house were the largest, each measuring about 18 1/2 feet square. The single-story room on the west side was smaller, measuring only about 12 1/2 feet wide by 18 1/2 feet long. This room may have functioned as the kitchen because of its access to the stairway leading to the cellar—where food would have been stored—under the west side of the house.

The stairway in the small stair hall rose in front of the chimney. A ghosted outline of the stairway (beneath the existing stairway, on the east-wall paneling) indicates that it ascended from east to west, as it does today, thus allowing headroom in the cellar stairway below.

House Enlarged, Circa 1725

Sometime after the house was constructed circa 1705, a second story was added on the west side. This may have occurred sometime between 1724 and 1728, when Joseph Meriam's tax valuation rose from 22 to 36 pounds.³¹ An approximate date of "circa 1725" has been assigned to this improvement.

Joseph and Dorothy Meriam's family had expanded by 1725 to include five children: Dorothy (19 years); Mary (18 years); Joseph (16 years); Samuel (13 years), and Nathan (5 years). One last

³⁰ A one-story configuration on the west side is suggested by the framing posts, which are made up of two sections, each being one story tall. A more typical construction technique would have been for the posts to extend the entire two stories.

³¹ The tax valuations for 1725 through 1727 are missing. No other property transactions are known that would increase Joseph Meriam's real estate tax assessment. Ebenezer's assessment, by comparison, was 22 pounds in 1724 and 23 pounds in 1728.

child, Josiah, was born the following year. The Meriam household therefore could have used the additional space that a new second-story room would have provided.

The architectural investigation of the Meriam House found that post-and-beam construction was also used in building the new second story. Like the rest of the house, the ceiling framing was exposed and painted (as can be seen in the attic today). The new room probably had a fireplace, which would have been added to the west side of the existing chimney. The new gable roof was continuous with the roof on the east side of the house, making the house appear as one large structure with a large center chimney.

New Chimney and Kitchen, Circa 1743

The architectural investigation of the Meriam House revealed that the original chimney was rebuilt sometime in the 18th century. This is based on the fact that the existing chimney has: (a) charred bricks in locations outside the fireboxes; (b) a mixture of brick sizes; (c) the remains of an 18th-century bake oven oriented north-south, to serve a kitchen on the back side of the house; and (d) an intact bake oven in the east room. It is thought that the chimney was rebuilt, and a new back kitchen addition was built, circa 1743. This was when Joseph and Dorothy's son Nathan married and presumably set up housekeeping with his parents. Two separate kitchens with new cooking fireplaces would have been needed. One was located in the new addition, the other in the original east room. (The original kitchen function was apparently removed from the west room entirely.) These changes in fireplace needs would have been more than enough to cause the remodeling of the original chimney.

The bake ovens for the two new fireplaces were located to the side of the fireplace opening, which is a later development in fireplace design. Architectural Historian Abbott Lowell Cummings attributes this change as occurring "during the second quarter of the 18th century."³² A date of circa 1743 is therefore feasible.

The earliest documented reference to a separate kitchen is in Nathan Meriam's will dated 1782, in which the "kitchen" is described separately from the "upright part of [the] house."³³ A logical deduction is that the kitchen was located in a one-story shed addition on the back side of the house. Unfortunately, few details about the early kitchen are known, because it was replaced by a large, 1 1/2-story kitchen addition circa 1810.

Property Deeds of 1745 and 1747

The earliest-known documented reference to Joseph Meriam's house is a deed for the east adjacent property dated April 23, 1745. This deed, which conveys the property from Jonathan Stow to Joseph's son Nathan Meriam, describes the property as being bounded "south on the county road,

³² Abbott Lowell Cummings, *The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay, 1625-1725* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 121.

³³ Middlesex County probate document #15095; the will is dated Sept. 9, 1782.

westerly on Bedford Road and on Joseph Merriams House lot..."³⁴ This definitely establishes Joseph Merriam's house as being in the same approximate location as the existing Meriam House.

Joseph Meriam, then described as a "Locksmith," conveyed his house to his son Nathan on April 3, 1747. The deed suggests that Nathan may have been occupying half the house at the time with his family, which then included his wife, a son, and a daughter. These living arrangements and the house lot property are described in the deed from Joseph as follows:

All my Buildings with all my land both in Concord and Bedford and Acton only I reserve for my own Comfort during my natural Life the one half of my dwelling house and also during the natural Life of my now married Wife with the gardening before house which properly belongs to the house....³⁵

Two days earlier, Joseph had also conveyed the south adjacent property to his youngest son Josiah. This property, which is believed to have included the circa-1663 house built by John Meriam, is described in the deed as follows:

A certain piece of Upland containing by Estimation half an acre be it more or less lying and being in the Easterly part of said Concord with a dwelling house and barn thereon bounded as follows Northerly on my own land [Conveyed to Nathan Meriam April 3, 1747] Easterly upon Nathan Meriam Southerly upon the Bay Road and westerly on Billerica Road.... And also the Improvement of the one half of my Shop and Tools during his Life but if you ever sell you shall give to your Brother Nathan Meriam the Offer of buying the Improvement of the said Tools....³⁶

Nathan Meriam, Owner

Nathan Meriam Household

As mentioned in the previous section, Nathan Meriam and his wife Dorothy appear to have shared the house with Nathan's father and mother, Joseph and Dorothy Meriam. Joseph died in 1750, only three years after conveying the house and property to his son Nathan. Dorothy presumably continued to live in the house after the death of Joseph. She remarried in December of

³⁴ Middlesex County Deed, Book 45, pp. 345-346. The property included "a certain tenement House and barn situate in the East part of Concord," which may have been the original family homestead of John Meriam. How or why Stow acquired the property is not known.

³⁵ Middlesex County Deed, Book 49, pp. 259-260.

³⁶ Middlesex County Deed, Book 49, pp. 260-261. Nathan may in fact have purchased the improvement of the shop and tools from his brother, because Nathan (not Josiah) was assessed in 1770 for a separate shop. The transfer from Josiah to Nathan, however, is not documented.

the following year, and probably moved to the home of her new husband, a Mr. John Hunt of Concord.³⁷

Nathan and Abigail had 11 children between the years 1744 and 1764. They included five boys and six girls, nine of whom lived to maturity. They were Joseph (1744-1826); Abigail (1745, marries Nathan Stow 1780); Dorothy (1747-1766); Lucy (1749, marries Amos Hosmer 1776); Nathan (1751-?); Mehitabel (1753-54); David (1754-55); Mary (1756, marries Joseph Wright 1776); Hepzibah (1758, marries Aaron Wright 1788); Amos (1760-1804); and Ephraim (1764-1803).

Nathan Meriam's household was therefore a full one, consisting of up to three generations from 1747 to 1751, and as many as 12 family members.

Town Selectman, 1774-1779

Nathan Meriam's primary occupation appears to have been that of a small farmer, based on the property deeds of 1745 and 1747 that list him as a "husbandman," and those of 1751 through 1771 that list him as a "yeoman."³⁸ He also served for a period of five years—from 1774 to 1779—as an elected selectman for the Town of Concord. As such, he played an important role in town politics during the American War for Independence.

Nathan Meriam was elected one of three town selectman on March 7, 1774, following the refusal of incumbent selectman Captain Timothy Wheeler to serve another one-year term.³⁹ The duties of the selectmen were to call and draw up the agendas for the town meetings, and to serve as assessors and overseers of the poor. The function of the "Committee of Correspondence" was also added to the duties of the selectmen in May 1775; it was not until March 1777 that a separate seven-member "Committee of Safety, Correspondence and Inspections" was elected.⁴⁰

A sample agenda for an upcoming town meeting, which was scheduled to take place approximately one month after the skirmish at Concord and Lexington, was drafted by the selectmen on May 16, 1775. It included the following articles:

1. To elect one or more persons to the Provincial Congress to meet in Watertown May 30;

³⁷ W. S. Appleton, *The Family of Merriam of Massachusetts* (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1892), p. 13. No reference to the marriage is found in Pope, pp. 56-57.

³⁸ Middlesex County Deeds: 1745 (Book 45, p. 345); 1747 (Book 49, p. 259); 1751 (Book 56, p. 508); 1753 (Book 50, p. 684); 1758 (Book 55, p. 332); and 1771 (Book 74, p. 177).

³⁹ Nathan Meriam served with Ephraim Wood, Jr., and John Flint from March 1774 to March 1775, and Ephraim Wood, Jr., and Nehemiah Hunt from March 1775 to March 1778.

⁴⁰ Microfilm reels at the Concord Free Public Library entitled "Town of Concord, Mass., Vol. 4, Records of Selectmen & Town Meetings, 1746-1777," and "Town of Concord, Mass., Vol. 5, Records of the Selectmen & Town Meetings, 1777-1790." Nathan's younger brother Josiah, who lived at the corner, was elected to serve on the Committee of Safety, Correspondence and Inspections from March 1777 to March 1783.

2. To see what sum of money to grant the "minute men" to pay & defray Town charges;
3. To consider the school budget;
4. To consider the school affairs;
5. To determine how to pay Colonel James Barrett for his services as Representative in General Court for Concord and as a Delegate at Congress;
6. To choose a Committee to provide for members of the Town of Boston "to advise of Congress"; and
7. To hear a land dispute.⁴¹

The town records indicate that Nathan Meriam was paid for his services as selectman for the years 1777 to 1779 as follows: 2 pounds, 17 shillings, and 8 pence in March 1777; 13 pounds, 9 shillings, and 9 pence in March 1778; and 50 pounds, 17 shillings, and 10 pence in March 1779 (which also included compensation for beef and meal and other articles for the poor).⁴² What amounts, if any, he received in 1775 and 1776 could not be found.

Events of April 19, 1775

The single event for which the Meriam House is most famous is the mid-day encounter of the British and the Minute Men at Meriam's Corner on April 19, 1775. It is said that the Minute Men fired at the British from behind the walls and buildings of the Meriam House, thus beginning the running battle back to Lexington and Boston.

A review was therefore made of the contemporary American and British accounts of the day, in hopes of finding the original references to the Meriam House and property. Unfortunately, no specific mention of the features at Meriam's Corner exist in the depositions, official reports, letters, or diary accounts made in 1775. Descriptions by both the Americans and British do, however, make general mention of the manmade and landscape features from behind which the "Provincials" fired during the British retreat from Concord. American sources noted buildings, houses, stone walls, fences, and hills. Features mentioned in the British accounts include houses, houses on each side of the road, barns, walls, stone walls, hedges, ditches, trees, hills, and woods. One British source more generally stated that the Provincials fired "from behind anything which afforded them shelter."⁴³

⁴¹ Entry for May 16, 1775; in *Town Records, 1746-1777*, p. 428.

⁴² Entries for March 3, 1777 (p. 64); March 2, 1778 (p. 80); and March 1, 1779 (p. 109); in *Town Records, 1777-1790*.

⁴³ First-hand accounts by both the Americans and the British have been compiled by J-R Vincent Kehoe in two privately printed books: *"We Were There!" April 19th 1775: The British Soldiers* (1974), and *"We Were There!" April 19th 1775: The American Rebels* (1975); copyright by J-R Kehoe.

There is also general agreement in the contemporary accounts that the encounter took place outside of town, on the way back to Lexington. One American letter notes that the first attack occurred "about one mile distant" from town, while a British description noted that the firing commenced "before we had gone 1/2 mile."⁴⁴ No specific references are made to the bridge over the Mill Brook, which are found in later accounts.

The only contemporary map of the day is in the diary of one of the British soldiers—Lieutenant Frederick Mackenzie of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. The map shows roads, buildings, bridges, and the positions of troops; unfortunately, it stops just short of Meriam's Corner. It is of importance, however, for placing the scene of the retreat on Lexington Road near Meriam's Corner.⁴⁵

It was not until 1825, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the battle, that the American veterans of April 19, 1775, began to write more specifically of the events of that day. How accurate their memories were by this time, and how much of their stories were embellished, is impossible to say.

Reverend Edmund Foster, with the Reading Company of Minute Men, wrote the following to Col. Daniel Shattuck of Concord, in a letter dated Littleton, March 10, 1825:

We rendezvoused near the middle of the town of Bedford; left horses, and marched forward in pursuit of the enemy. A little before we came to Merriam's hill, we discovered the enemy's flank guard, of about 80 or 100 men, who, on their retreat from Concord, kept that height of land, the main body [being] in the road. The British troops and the Americans, at that time, were equally distant from **Merriam's corner** [bold added]. About twenty rods short of that place, the Americans made a halt. The British marched down the hill with very slow, but steady step, without music, or a word being spoken that could be heard. Silence reigned on both sides. As soon as the British had gained the main road, and passed a small bridge near that corner, they faced about suddenly, and fired a volley of musketry upon us. They overshot; and no one, to my knowledge, was injured by the fire. The fire was immediately returned by the Americans, and two British soldiers fell dead at a little distance from each other, in the road near the brook. The battle now began, and was carried on with little or no military discipline and order, on the part of the Americans, during the remainder of that day. Each one sought his own place and opportunity to attack and

⁴⁴ Letter dated April 22, 1775; in Kehoe, *American Rebels*, p. 154. Also, diary excerpt of Lt. John Barker, 4th Regiment; in Kehoe, *British Soldiers*, pp. 105-106.

⁴⁵ The diary covers the period January 5-April 30, 1775. The map is pasted in the diary; its authorship is uncertain, but it is nevertheless thought to be authentic. Both the diary and map were reprinted in 1926 in a volume edited by the historian Allen French and entitled *A British Fusilier in Revolutionary Boston* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926).

annoy the enemy from behind trees, rocks, fences and buildings, as seemed most convenient....⁴⁶

Amos Barrett, with Captain Brown's Concord Minute Man Company, had a different recollection of the event, about which he wrote on April 19, 1825:

After a while we found them [the British] a marching back towards Boston, we was soon after them. When they got about a mil[e] [and a] half to a Road that Comes from bedford and Bildraa [Billerica] they was way Laid and a grait many killd when I got thair a grait many Lay dead and the Road was bloody.⁴⁷

Also written at a later unidentified date (probably 1825) was the remembrance of Thaddeus Blood, of Captain Barrett's Concord Militia Company:

It was thot best to go to the east part of the Town & take them as they cam back each took his own station, for myself I took my stand south of where Den [Deacon] Minot then lived [which was east of the Meriam property], & saw the British come from Concord their right flank in the meadows, their left on the hill when near the foot of the hill, Col. Thomeson of Billerica came up with 3 or 4 hundred men and there was a heavy fire but the distance so great, that little injury was done on either side, at least I saw but one killed. number of wounded I know not....⁴⁸

Later still is a second-hand account that was relayed by Major Brooks (commander of the Reading Company) to William H. Sumner, who published it in 1858:

When he [Brooks] came near the main road from Concord to Lexington, he saw the flank guard of the British army on this side of a hill which intervened and kept the main body from his sight. He imagined that the soldiers he saw belonged to the Charlestown Artillery Company (having the same colored uniform) on their retreat from the scene of conflict. He halted until he discovered his mistake by seeing the flank guard fall in with the main body to cross a bridge over a large brook on the road. Finding that his position could not be outflanked, he ordered his men to advance, and, taking a position at **Merriam's Corner** [bold added], covered by a barn and the walls around it, told them to fire direct at the bridge, which was twenty or thirty rods off. As the British army was in great haste to make good its

⁴⁶ The letter was published in 1827 in Ezra Ripley's *A History of the Fight at Concord* (Concord: Allen & Atwill, 1827), pp. 32-33. Foster ended his letter as follows: "Though almost half a century has elapsed since these events took place, yet my memory has been refreshed with them as often as I have passed by the places where the deeds were done, and therefore have now as perfect a knowledge of them as though they had been the works of yesterday...."

⁴⁷ Amos Barrett, with a foreword by Allen French, *The Concord Fight: An Account by Amos Barrett* (Boston: The Thomas Todd Co., 1924).

⁴⁸ Kehoe, *American Rebels*, pp. 203-205. Kehoe notes that it was written at a later period and found among Blood's papers; it was printed in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* on April 20, 1886.

retreat, it fired but one volley in return. When the enemy had passed, examination was made to see what had been the effect of the fire, and several persons—the writer thinks he said nine—were found *hors de combat* on or near the bridge.⁴⁹

Assuming that this account is accurate, and that the Reading Company was traveling towards Concord on what is now Old Bedford Road, this would place the barn behind (on the north side of) the existing Meriam House. It was therefore most likely the barn of Nathan Meriam, who was then living in the Meriam House. The earliest photograph of the house (fig. 5) does in fact show what appears to be a barn in this location.⁵⁰

A more personal account of the events at Meriam's Corner were given many years later, in 1894, in a report to the American Antiquarian Society by John McKinstry Merriam:

The place of the encounter is the extreme eastern end of the Concord settlement, at the junction of the Lexington and Bedford roads.

...At the time of the Revolution there were three Meriam houses at this corner, one of which, the Ephraim Meriam house, on the Bedford road, is standing to-day. An older house, which was occupied by my father's grandfather, Josiah Meriam, was located on the Lexington road, about the same distance from the junction of the roads as is the existing house. All traces of this house have disappeared, but its location was pointed out to me by my father [Adolphus Merriam, 1820-1888] a short time before he died. Josiah Meriam was a sergeant in Captain Joseph Hosmer's company of Minute Men, and his son, Josiah, Jr., was a private in the same company.⁵¹ In February, 1775, the father was one of a committee appointed by the town to inspect the Minute Men, and to enforce the three articles of their organization....

Josiah Meriam was a member of the Committee of Correspondence for Concord from 1777 to 1782 inclusive, and in 1779 was a delegate to the State Convention [that met in Concord].⁵²

⁴⁹ William H. Sumner, *A History of East Boston* (Boston: J.E. Tilton & Co., 1858), p. 356, footnote 2. Sumner prefaces the story as follows: "The account...was received from him [the late Governor Brooks] when riding with him to attend a review near Concord. On the way, in passing over the bridge, he pointed out the very barn under cover of which he made the attack. The sight of these brought to his mind the circumstances which he then related; or otherwise, from his well-known modesty, it is probable the public would never have been informed of the particulars of this attack of the gallant captain, with a single company, upon the whole British army, which would hardly have been justifiable had not the enemy been on a hasty retreat."

⁵⁰ A second Meriam barn, belonging to Nathan Meriam's brother Josiah, also existed in 1775, according to a town document dated March 5, 1775. This document is a record of a meeting of the Concord Selectmen, in which the several highways in the town were assigned to the several highway surveyors. One surveyor, Samuel Brooks, was given in part "Bedford Road [now Old Bedford Road] from m. Josiah Meriams Barn to Bedford Line...." [Source: copy of the original document at the CFPL, Special Collections.]

⁵¹ Merriam cites "Mass. Muster and Pay Rolls, Vol. 55, p. L. 18, p. 78, file L."

⁵² Merriam cites Shattuck, pp. 121-122.

On the morning of the nineteenth of April, when the alarm was given in Concord that the British Soldiers were coming, Josiah Meriam, with his older sons, Josiah, Jr., and Timothy, went to the village, and later were among the forces at the North Bridge, and probably crossed the meadows and appeared again at the encounter near the house. Joseph, the youngest son, my grandfather, then seven years old, remained at home, as he always said, "to take care of the women," and soon went with them to a place of refuge behind the hill. The British soldiers entered the house, helped themselves to whatever breakfast they could find, taking the unbaked pies from the oven, took the kettle of soft soap from the crane over the open fire, spilled it upon the floor, and scattered the ashes from the fireplace. It was fortunate that they helped themselves liberally in the morning, for later in the day they repassed the same house when hot johnny cake and new baked bread and fragrant pies could not tempt them to linger.

My grandfather [Joseph Meriam, 1767-1856] lived to be eighty-nine years old. He must have been among the very last who could, from actual recollection, tell the story of the 19th of April....⁵³

In conclusion, it is likely that an encounter between the American patriots and the retreating British soldiers did in fact take place in the vicinity of Meriam's Corner. Less certain is the number of British casualties, which in later recollections ranged from one to nine.⁵⁴

Appearance of Meriam's Corner, 1775

It may be surmised from the documentation cited in the previous section, together with earlier property deeds, that several buildings were standing in the vicinity of the area later known as Meriam's Corner in 1775. One of these was a barn, surrounded by walls, which was about 20 or 30 rods from the bridge on Lexington Road; another was the barn of Josiah Meriam on Bedford Road (now Old Bedford Road); and a third was the house of Josiah Meriam on Lexington Road.

Two other Meriam houses are alluded to in the later description of John McKinstry Merriam dated 1894. It is probable that one was Nathan Meriam's (the Meriam House), and the other was John Meriam's (a nephew of Nathan). Both houses were on Bedford Road, with the Nathan Meriam house on the east side and the John Meriam house on the west side. The barn surrounded by walls

⁵³ John McKinstry Merriam, "Concord," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, Vol. 9 (Worcester, April 1894), pp. 253-269; also, an excerpt of this article is in Pope, *Merriam Genealogy*, pp. 463-464. John McKinstry Merriam unfortunately never met his grandfather, Joseph, who died six years before he was born in 1862. The family story of the events of April 19, 1775, were no doubt passed on by his father, Adolphus (1820-1888).

⁵⁴ For a more detailed analysis of the events at Meriam's Corner, see Douglas P. Sabin's *April 19, 1775: A Historiographical Study*, Part IV, "Meriam's Corner," dated June 25, 1984 (Concord: Minute Man NHP, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Sept. 17, 1987).

most likely belonged to Nathan Meriam, and an earlier property deed also places a barn on John Meriam's property.⁵⁵

One other building, whose location is not exactly known, is the locksmith shop of Josiah Meriam. The only description of this shop is in the property deed of 1747, which conveyed one-half the improvement of the shop, along with the tools, to Josiah from his father Joseph. Where the shop was sited is not described in the deed, although it is generally assumed that it was not far from Josiah Meriam's house.⁵⁶

Miscellaneous outbuildings, such as privies and woodsheds, were also most likely on the property, although no documentation of them is known.

The exterior appearance of the Meriam House in 1775 may only be conjectured, since no written descriptions or drawings of it are known. It is likely, based on the architectural examination of the building, that the basic two-story form of the main house, with center brick chimney, was similar to its appearance today. A one-story kitchen addition is believed to have existed by this time, on the back (north) side. The siding was probably hand-rived clapboards, and the roof shingles wood. Unknown details include the window fenestration and sash type, the style of the exterior doors and surrounding trim, and the painted finishes (if any).

As explained in the previous section, the barn of the Meriam House is thought to have been located behind the house. A circa-1890 photograph (fig. 5) shows a barn in this location, which may be the one extant in 1775.

Nathan and Josiah Meriam Households, 1775

An educated guess can be made as to the composition of the two households of Nathan and Josiah Meriam on April 19, 1775, based on the genealogical record. Each owned a house near the corner of Lexington and Bedford Roads, which they presumably occupied on that day.

Nathan's family probably consisted of himself, his wife, and seven children who were still at home. The names and approximate ages of the family members on that day were Nathan (54) and Abigail (53), and their children Abigail (29), Lucy (27), Nathan (24), Mary (19), Hepzibah (16), Amos (14), and Ephraim (11).⁵⁷

Josiah's family was larger because he had 10 children, all of whom are assumed to have been at home. The family in 1775 included Josiah (49) and his wife Lydia (age about 49), and their children Lydia (27), Mary (25), Rebecca (23), Sarah (22), Josiah (19), Timothy (17), Anna (15), Oliver (13), Elizabeth (10), and Joseph (7).

⁵⁵ Middlesex County Deed dated 1736-37, Book 39, p. 57. This was the original house of John Meriam, which was conveyed to Joseph Meriam's son Samuel, and later to Samuel's son John (who owned it in 1775).

⁵⁶ Middlesex County Deed, Book 49, p. 260.

⁵⁷ Son Nathan married at an unrecorded date and removed to New Ipswich, New Hampshire. He may have been gone by 1775, since there is no mention in the Concord records of his involvement in town affairs.

Meriam Family Involvement in the Revolutionary War

The two Meriam brothers, Nathan and Josiah, each made significant contributions during the American War for Independence.

Nathan Meriam was elected to serve as one of three selectmen for the Town of Concord for five years—from March 1774 until March 1779. He is also on record as supplying wood for the Continental Army in the winter of 1776, and clothing (shirts, shoes, and stockings) for the soldiers in the summer of 1778.⁵⁸

Josiah Meriam, Nathan's youngest brother, also held an elected town position for six years—from March 1777 to March 1783, as one of seven members of the Committee of Safety, Correspondence and Inspection. Like his brother, he supplied wood to the Continental Army in 1776 and clothing for the soldiers in 1778. In his professional capacity as a locksmith, he was paid for "ruling the Town Guns in Order" in March 1778 and for "alter[ing] the Town Gun" in April of that year.⁵⁹

The writings of Josiah Meriam's great-nephew John McKinstry Merriam in 1894 also note that Josiah Meriam served as "a sergeant in Captain Joseph Hosmer's company of Minute Men, and his son, Josiah, Jr., was a private in the same company." Furthermore, Josiah Sr. is said to have been "one of a committee appointed by the town to inspect the Minute Men" in February 1775, and "a delegate to the State Convention."⁶⁰

Nathan Meriam's Will, 1782

Nathan Meriam died November 11, 1782, at the age of 62. His will, dated September 9, 1782, left most of his estate (both real and personal) in equal halves to his two youngest sons—Ephraim (age 22) and Amos (age 18). He also made provision for his surviving wife, Abigail, as follows:

[During] every part of her natral life she shall be a widow the use and improvement of the westerly end of the upright part of my house and as much of the kitchen and seller as will be nesecary for her to improve and the use and improvement of two Good cows to be well kept Both summer and winter and a Good horse provided for her to ride when she pleses and

⁵⁸ "Town of Concord, Mass., Vol. 4, Records of Selectmen & Town Meetings, 1746-1777," entries dated Mar. 7, 1774; Mar. 6, 1775; Mar. 4, 1776; and Mar. 20, 1776; also "Town of Concord, Mass., Vol. 5, Records of the Selectmen & Town Meetings, 1777-1790," entries dated Mar. 3, 1777; Mar. 2, 1778; July 8, 1778; and Mar. 1, 1779.

⁵⁹ "Town of Concord, Mass., Vol. 4, Records of Selectmen & Town Meetings, 1746-1777," entries for Mar. 20, 1776; also "Town of Concord, Mass., Vol. 5, Records of the Selectmen & Town Meetings, 1777-1790," entries dated Mar. 3, 1777; Mar. 2, 1778; Apr. 24, 1778; July 8, 1778; Mar. 1, 1779; Mar. 6, 1780; Mar. 5, 1781; and Mar. 4, 1782.

⁶⁰ Merriam, "Concord." Merriam cites the "Mass. Muster and Pay Rolls, Vol. 55," and Shattuck, pp. 121-122.

a soficant of firewood for her to burn cut fit for the fire and carried into the house.... [Also] to be at her own disposal all my Beding and furniture and all my Linins of all kinds and small chests and chest with Draws and Case of Draws chairs tables looking glasses handirons and fire shovels and tongs and all my Brass and Iron ware of all kinds of my plates and knives and forks Fancy Delf and Earthen ware and thirteen pounds six shillings and eight pence lawful silver....⁶¹

As has been discussed in an earlier section, the description of the house suggests that the kitchen was separate from the "upright" part of the house, being most likely located in a one-story shed on the back. The "seller" (i.e., cellar) was presumably the same cellar that exists today under the east side of the main house. The "upright part of my house" was probably that which existed under the main roof—that is, the two parlors in the first story and the two chambers in the second story, separated by the center chimney and stair hall.

Ephraim Meriam, Owner

Deed Dated 1788

Amos Meriam conveyed his one-half interest in his deceased father's estate to his brother Ephraim for the sum of 222 pounds in 1788. The property deed for this transaction was dated March 16 and included the home lot, which was described as follows:

One piece called the home medow with one half all the buildings standing thereon containing eight acres be the same more or less bounded southerly on the county road, easterly on land called Phineus Bloods wifes thirds, northerly on Edward Flint and Timothy Hoars land, and westerly on the road leading to Bedford & on Josiah Miriams garden to the bounds first mentioned.⁶²

Ephraim Meriam Household

Ephraim Meriam was 24 years old when he bought out his brother Amos in 1788. Amos was still living in Concord in 1788 according to the deed, although the location of his residence is not known. It is possible that he and his family were still living in the Meriam House. Amos's family in 1788 consisted of his wife, Deborah Brooks, whom he wed in 1783, and his two-year-old daughter Phebe.

It certainly appears from the genealogical record that there would have been room in the house for such an arrangement. Six of Amos and Ephraim's brothers and sisters had married and established households of their own by this time. Sister Abigail, who married neighbor Nathan Stow in 1780, lived just down the street and across the road—not far from Meriam's Corner. Sister

⁶¹ Middlesex County Probate Document #15095.

⁶² Middlesex County Deed, Book 158, pp. 163-165.

Hepzibah had married Aaron Wright just the month before, in February 1788. Two sisters and a brother had also died by this time—Mehitable in 1754, David in 1755, and Dorothy in 1766. The only residents of the house in 1788 were therefore Ephraim, his widowed mother Abigail (then about 61 years old), and possibly Amos's growing family.

Both Amos and Ephraim were listed as "yeomen" in the 1788 deed. Later property deeds dated 1791 and 1803 also cite Ephraim as a "yeoman," suggesting that he continued to make his living as a small farmer. Amos, on the other hand, is referred to in a later probate document dated 1803 as a "gentleman."⁶³

Ephraim married Mary Brooks, a cousin of Amos's wife Deborah, on February 9, 1792. Together they had five children: Mary (1793), Ephraim (1795), Nathan (1798), and twin sons Rufus and Marshall (1801).

Ephraim's mother, Abigail, died on May 29, 1796, less than a year after the birth of Ephraim's namesake. She had presumably continued to occupy the west half of the house until her death, as specified in her late husband's will of 1782.

Amos's family, which consisted of five children by 1796, may have removed to Princeton, New Jersey by this time.⁶⁴ How long they lived at the Meriam House, if at all, is not known for certain.

No major renovations are known to have been made to the Meriam House during the ownership of Ephraim Meriam.

School House Constructed, 1799

Seven new schoolhouses were constructed in Concord in 1799, including one at Meriam's Corner on Lexington Road. This was also the year that the first school committee was organized, which oversaw a new uniform system of school regulations.⁶⁵

The building of the new schoolhouses is documented in the "Town of Concord Records of the Selectmen and Town Meetings, 1790-1814." The following was reported on May 1, 1797, by a building committee appointed to study the schoolhouses:

[We are] unanimously of the opinion that...there be five new School houses built in the out parts of this Town, viz, One in the East district...[& c.]. The length and breadth thereof to be 20 by 24 feet with porches...the expense is upon mature consideration estimated at seventy pounds each

⁶³ Middlesex County Deeds: Book 158, p. 163 (1788); Book 122, p. 441 (1791); and Book 158, p. 166 (1803). Middlesex County Probate Document #15056.

⁶⁴ Pope notes in his *Merriam Genealogy* that the family had moved to Princeton by 1806.

⁶⁵ JoAnn Early Levin, "Schools and Schooling in Concord: A Cultural History," *Chronos*, No. 2 (Waltham: Brandeis University, Fall 1983), pp. 350-351.

house.... And further report that it is the agreement in each district the School houses when built shall stand in the places in each district hereafter mentioned, viz, In the East district, at or near the place called Meriam's corner.... If the town should see cause to build the School houses within mentioned that they be built in the summer of 1798.⁶⁶

The financing of the schoolhouses was voted on in a town meeting held on January 8, 1798, in which it was

Voted, that the sum of Two thousand & two hundred dollars be assessed upon the polls and Estates of the inhabitants and raised as soon as it may be, for the purpose of defraying the expense of building School houses in the several school districts in the town of Concord.⁶⁷

Eight men were also chosen at this meeting to serve as a committee "to superintend and contract for building and completing of said School houses."⁶⁸

The location of the proposed new schoolhouse for the East District remained controversial, however, because a number of families on Virginia Road would have to travel a long distance to reach it. Two of these were Josiah Meriam and his son Joseph, who had recently moved from the old family house at Meriam's Corner to a house farther to the northeast on Virginia Road.

The East District schoolhouse had still apparently not been built as late as October 22, 1798, when one of the town-meeting agenda items included hearing "the report of the Committee relative to the establishing of the place for the school house in the East part of Town." The schoolhouse appears to have been finally completed by February 17, 1800, when the selectmen added the following article to the upcoming town meeting agenda:

To see if the town will remove the school house in the East school district, into the centre of the inhabitants; or establish two School houses, in said district, in such places, as the town shall think reasonable...to the request of Mr. Josiah Meriam & others.

It was decided the following year that the East District schoolhouse would remain where it was, and that a second schoolhouse would not be built. Rather, a committee appointed to study the situation recommended on March 2, 1801, that the Meriam and Wheeler families on Virginia Road be granted a refund of the money they had contributed to the new schoolhouses. This money was to be given to the nearby Lincoln school system, where the Virginia Road children were apparently attending school.

⁶⁶ Entry for May 1, 1797, in Concord Town Records, 1790-1814, pp. 119-120.

⁶⁷ It was subsequently voted on May 7, 1798, that an additional \$700 be raised for "completing the schoolhouses in this town." An even higher cost was recorded by local historian Lemuel Shattuck, who wrote the following in 1835: "In 1799, seven new schoolhouses, one in each district, including the centre, were built at an expense to the town of about \$4,000." [Source: *A History of the Town of Concord*, p. 208.]

⁶⁸ The committee members were Capt. John Buttrick, David Page, Edward Flint, Samuel Buttrick, Peter Barrett, Elijah Hosmer, Amos Hosmer, and Stephen Barrett.

No details are available on what arrangements (such as leasing) were made for the land on which the schoolhouse was built at Meriam's Corner, or the actual construction of the building. Ephraim Meriam appears to have been the owner of the land, based on a description of his estate following his death in 1803. The widow's third, which was set off April 21, 1806, described the southern boundary of the home lot as follows:

On Bedford road...to the Great road [i.e., Lexington Road]—Southerly in part on the great road, until it passes where the School House stands (reserving the ground where said School house stands) thence bounding where the old road was trod to a stake and stones to the thirds of the late widow Blood decd....⁶⁹

This passage suggests that the road may have been redirected—perhaps around 1799 when the schoolhouse was built.

A later description of the schoolhouse, in an "Annual Report of the School Committee" dated 1846, noted that the "East Quarter School House" was one room that contained 4,355 cubic feet. It was presumably of frame construction, because the schoolhouses made of brick were so-noted. The report also stated that all the old schoolhouses in the town, which included the one at Meriam's Corner, "stand on, and open directly into the street."

Only one view of this schoolhouse exists, in plan form, in a survey by Henry David Thoreau dated 1855. There are two versions of the plan, one being a site sketch dated June 26 (fig. 2), and the other being a more final version without the survey lines dated November 9 (fig. 3). The "School House" is shown on the east side of, and not far from, the "Brook." The schoolhouse faces south, with a small front "Porch" and a detached "Shed" on the east side. The main body of the schoolhouse is roughly square, measuring approximately 25 feet wide by 20 feet deep, as scaled on the plan.⁷⁰

The one-room district schools apparently welcomed both boys and girls and had no age requirements. By the age of nine, however, many left the district schools to attend the Grammar School in town.⁷¹ Ephraim and Mary Meriam's young children undoubtedly attended the schoolhouse, which was within easy walking of distance their home (the Meriam House).

The schoolhouse was used for more than 50 years—until 1853—when it was made obsolete by a new school building. How long the old schoolhouse remained standing after Thoreau recorded it in his survey of 1855 is not known.

⁶⁹ Middlesex County Probate document #15056.

⁷⁰ It is unlikely that the building was in use in 1855, because a new East Quarter schoolhouse had been built nearby in 1853 (discussed in detail in a later section).

⁷¹ Levin, p. 372.

Purchase of the East Adjacent Lot, 1803

Shortly before his death, Ephraim Meriam purchased two parcels of land on March 18, 1803, from his cousin John Meriam for \$250. One of the two parcels, which were both called "the thirds of the late widow Blood," was a 4-acre meadow lot on the east adjacent side of Ephraim Meriam's house lot.⁷² The parcel was described in the deed as follows:

Being meadow and upland containing four acres, be the same more or less bounded southerly on the country road, easterly on a ditch by land of Deacon George Minot, northerly on land of Edward Flint, and westerly on land of the said Ephraim Meriam to the country road first mentioned.⁷³

This lot remained as part of the Meriam property until a portion of it was sold in 1946.

Ephraim Meriam Probate, 1803-1806

Ephraim Meriam died on July 10, 1803, at the age of 39. Because he did not have a will, his estate was settled by first making itemized inventories of both his personal holdings and property for probate. These documents provide the most detailed descriptions to date of the house, its contents, the barn, and the home lot at Meriam's Corner.⁷⁴

The initial inventory, which was made October 27, 1803, and recorded with probate February 8, 1804, listed the following items. Note that the original spelling is preserved, and the numbers in parentheses represent interim values in dollars and cents.

Wearing Apearil

Military Cap & Uniform clothes (5.50) & pantaloons (2)	\$7.50
Four strait bodied coats (10.25) & two pair breeches (2)	12.25
One waist coat (2) one waist coat & breeches (1)	3.—
One pair of pantaloons (1) one frock (.75) one pair of shoes (.84)	2.59
Five cotten Linnen shirts	7.00

Plate

Two Large spoons (3) six small spoons (1.50)	4.50
--	------

⁷² The property had belonged to Nathaniel Ball, Jr. (1698, Deed Book 25, p. 373); later to Ebenezer Meriam (date unknown); then to John Champney (1758, Book 73, p. 208); then to Phineas Blood (1767, Book 69, p. 275), who had married Sarah, the widow of Ebenezer Meriam, Jr.; then to John and Sarah Champney (date unknown); and finally to John Meriam (1780, Book 147, p. 165).

⁷³ Middlesex County Deed, Book 158, p. 167.

⁷⁴ Middlesex County Probate document #15056.

House Furniture

First Bed & furniture (55) four coverlets (14) & two blankets (1.50)	70.50
Second Bed & bedding (20) Third Bed & bedding (15)	35.—
Fourth Bed & bedding (12) Fifth Bed & bedding (10)	22.—
Three pair cotten sheets (11.25) Six pair linnen sheets (18.75)	30.—
Seven pillow cases (3) one looking glass (11) & one small ditto (1)	15.—
Twenty yards of Linnen cloth (4) Ten yard of cotton cloth (4.16)	8.16
Fourteen table cloths (13.50) Eight napkins (2.66)	16.16
Desk (8) One large mahogany table (7) one tea ditto (6)	21.—
One cheritree table (4) Two candle stands (3) & one small table (1)	8.—
Two winsor chairs (2.50) Six jointed chairs (8)	10.50
Twelve kitchen chairs (4) Two chest (3) one ditto (.50)	7.50
One chest of draws (18) one foot wheel (2) one grate wheel (1)	21.—
Fourteen barrels of cyder (15) a number of old casks (5)	20.—
One churn No. of tubs & pails (2.50) One clock [head?] (.50)	3.—
Six pewter dishes (6) Ten pewter plates (3)	9.—
One pewter Bason (.33) two servers (.50)	0.83
Crockery ware & glass ditto (6) 6 tin ware (3)	9.—
Two pair of candle sticks (1.50) One & half case of knives & forks (1)	2.50
One brass kittle (5) one brass skillet (.50) & one skimmer (.25)	00.75
Warming pan (2) Iron ware (5.25) flat iron[s] (.84)	8.09
Two pairs of andiron (6) two fire shovels & tongs (2)	8.—
Tosting iron & grid irons (1) & fire baskets (1.25)	2.25
Bellows (.66) Saddle Bridles & Bags (14)	14.66
Fire arms and accutrements (8) one watch (12)	20.—
One Morgage Deed of Nathan Meriam of four hundred dollars	400.—
One note of Benjamin Prescott (18.75) + interest (1.80)	20. 55

Live Stock

One horse (60) One yoke of oxen (68) Seven cows (126)	254.—
Three calves (21) Four hogs (60)	81.—

Farming Utensils

Cart & wheels (10) two plough (8) wheelbarrows (3)	21.—
Two Draft chains (3) one horse tra[] (2)	
2 shovels (1)	6.—
Two hoes (1) Iron Bar (.50) two ox yokes (1.75)	[sic] 3.25
Six tons of English Hay (90) Fifteen ton of meadow (75)	165.—
Twenty bushells of Rice (13.33) Fifteen ditto of oats (3.75)	17.-8
One Hundred of Ear Corn (50) Three Bushes of Beans (3)	53.—
Sleigh & harness (25) two Bushels of flax seed (2)	27.—
A Number of Carpenters tools (3) Two [?] & [?] (3)	6.—

Real Estate

The Dwelling House (800) Barn (220)	1,020.—
The House lot, twelve acres	720.—
The Blood Lot 2 acres (60), the Rock island fifteen acres (500)	560.—
Wood Lot 19 acres wood & meadow Land (513)	513.—
House swamp & Hartwell pasture 35 acres (1120)	1,120.—
Stow field 3 acres (120) Burch island three acres (30)	150.—
Stow pasture six acres	240.—
Three acres of River meadow (40)	40.—
home field four acres	280.—
three acres Lot west of the Road nigh the house	150.—
the Pew in the meeting House	85.—

	\$6,331.62

Signed Octr 27, 1803, by George Minott, John Meriam and Joshua Brooks

The widow, Mary Meriam, had repairs made to the barn and a cart in 1804 and 1805, for which she requested compensation of the probate court:⁷⁵

She craves further allowance for repairs made by her on the Barn & Cart,
viz.

1804, April 16th paid P. Chamberlain per receipt	3.56
Do. 26th, Do Saml. Sage for Cart, per receipt	12.66
1805, Jany bought 15 Thousand of Shingles	45.00
June 18th paid J & H. Davis for nails	3.45

⁷⁵ Middlesex County Probate document #15056.

Do. 21st Do. J & H. Havis for sundries & nails	5.89
Nov. 5th Do. C. Hammon for nails	3.51
June 19th Do. Peter Winn for shingling the barn	13.46
Do. for Boarding the workmen while shingling said Barn	6.00

She also craves an allowance for one Cow killed for her family in the fall of 1803, apprized in the inventory taken by Capt. Amos Miriam Administrator, October 27, 1803

23.92

Also for three Cows bought by the said Mary Meriam with money belonging to the estate which are included in the inventory taken by Nathan Stow administrator April 30, 1805.

59.00

December 4th paid Timothy Brooks a note of hand given by said deceased

\$293.26

100.19

Decemr 5th 1805 Mary Meriam \$393.45

Another inventory of the estate was made April 21, 1806, at which time the amount designated for the widow Mary (known as the "widow's third") was calculated. The total value of the estate was then listed as being \$4,589, one third of which was figured to be \$1,529.67. Detailed descriptions of the widow's third are transcribed below:⁷⁶

We then Proceeded and set off to Mary Meriam widow of said deceased her dower or thirds out of said deceased estate in the following manner to wit—

The one third of the dwelling house, the westerly end thereof, the whole of the upright part of the same throughout together with the bedroom in the back part of said house, with an uninterrupted privilege of doing her heavy kitchen work in the back kitchen—with the use & improvement of one third part of the celler under the easterly part of said dwelling house—and of passing & repassing in at the front door of said house—and of going up Chamber & Garrot, and down Celler as occasion may serve—apprized at two hundred & sixty six dollars—

\$266.00

One third part of the Barn, which is described as follows to wit, the westerly part of the same to the easterly side of the west flowerway to the cell by said flowerway—and thro the Barn apprized at—

73.00

⁷⁶ Middlesex County Probate document #15056.

Six acres and a half of land on, and about which said Buildings stand—and is bounded as follows—westerly on Bedford road in part—and part of the Garden of the late John Meriam deceased, to the Great road—Southerly in part on the great road, untill it passes where the school house stands (reserving the ground where said school house stands) thence bounding where the old road was trod to a stake and stones to the thirds of the late widow Blood decd—thence bounding Easterly on land that was of thirds sd. to a stake and stones by land of Edward Flint thence bounding northerly on land of said Flint & of Jon^s Hoar to the road first mentioned, apprized at—

350.00

Reserving the uninterrupted privilege to the owner of the two thirds the free use and improvement of the land on which their part of the dwelling house stands and of passing & repassing around the same for repairs & c. and also of laying their fire wood near the house where usually it has been laid—and further of improving the one half of the Barn yard as it is now fenced during the time they shall keep up a barn on the ground it now stands on, and no longer—and if going around said barn for repairs, & c. and of passing and repassing to their part of the Barn yard & c. & c.

Also set off for the widow were 3 acres of the home field (valued at \$227); 5 acres of the Stow pasture (\$200); 3 acres of woodland at Rocky Island (\$99); 3 acres at Burch Island (\$30); 5 acres woodland and swamp at Hartwell pasture (\$130.67); 2 acres of Stow field (\$112); and one-half of the meeting house pew (\$42).

In conclusion, it may be surmised from Ephraim Meriam's probate documents that his estate at Meriam's Corner in 1806 included a dwelling house, a barn, and a schoolhouse (the land of which the Meriams appear to have retained ownership). Also standing at the corner—but closer to the intersection of the roads—were the garden, house, and barn belonging to the estate of John Meriam (and before him, Josiah Meriam).

The probate description of Ephraim Meriam's house indicates that it was divided into an east side and a west side and included an "upright" portion, a back section with a bedroom and a kitchen, a front doorway, a cellar on the east side, and a chamber and garret (most likely the attic) in the upper stories of the west side.

The barn, which was also divided into east and west sides, was on the same side of the road as the house. It was probably behind the house, based on an early photograph taken in the late 19th century that shows what appears to be a barn in this location (fig. 5). The barn was probably not new in 1805, because the widow Mary then had it repaired using shingles and nails; whether the shingles were used on the roof or walls is not known.⁷⁷ The description of the widow's third of the barn as being from the "easterly side of the west flowerway to the cell by said flowerway—and thro the Barn" has been interpreted by one researcher to mean "the entrance to the barn cellar was

⁷⁷ It is also not certain that this is the same barn that was standing on April 19, 1775. A later account of the 1775 encounter at Meriam's corner, published in 1858, suggests that it was. (See Sumner, p. 356, footnote 2, in which Gov. Brooks is described as pointing out "the very barn under cover of which he made the attack.")

flanked by flowers....”⁷⁸ It is more likely, however, that “flowerway” and “cell” referred to features within the barn, such as a floorway (or aisle) and a stall (or a small room). Outside the barn was a “barn yard,” half of which was “fenced.”

The schoolhouse, which is discussed in detail in the previous section, was located on the Great Road (known today as Lexington Road). The description of the property line beyond the schoolhouse, bounding “where the old road was trod,” suggests that some rerouting of the road had occurred by this time—perhaps in 1799 when the schoolhouse was built.

The westerly side of the property, near the intersection of the roads, was bounded in part by “the Garden of the late John Meriam, deceased.”⁷⁹ A house and barn were probably also still standing at this time, based on an inventory of John Meriam’s estate made the previous year, on January 27, 1805, which included an entry for the “house barn & land lately purchased of Josiah Meriam,” then valued at \$400.⁸⁰ As described earlier, these buildings are believed to have been the core of John Meriam’s original 17th-century homestead, which were conveyed (with one-half acre) to Josiah Meriam in 1747. Josiah and his son Joseph had moved to Virginia Road by April 1797, according to documentation in the town records on building new schoolhouses.

William Swan, Owner

Marriage to Widow Mary Meriam, 1806

Ephraim Meriam’s widow, Mary, next married William Swan sometime between April 11 and June 12, 1806.⁸¹ Swan, it is said, “had been a tavern keeper in the old Brooks house on Lexington road” (i.e., the Noah Brooks Tavern).⁸² Although no documentation has been found to substantiate this, there was nevertheless a family connection with the tavern, since Mary’s sister, Dorothy, was married to the owner, Noah Brooks.⁸³ Very little is known about the Swan family

⁷⁸ Joyce L. Malcolm, *The Scene of the Battle, 1775: Historic Grounds Report, MIMA* (Boston: NPS, 1985), p. 105.

⁷⁹ John Meriam was a cousin of Ephraim (the son of his uncle, Samuel), who had died on October 15, 1804.

⁸⁰ Middlesex County Probate document #15076.

⁸¹ The documentation of this marriage is found in the probate records of the late Ephraim Meriam. On April 11, 1806, the widow Mary signed her name “Mary Meriam” (document #15057, regarding guardianship of the children); later, on June 12, 1806, when assets were distributed, Mary was described as the “widow, now the wife of William Swan” (document #15056).

⁸² Wheeler, in *Our American Mile*, says “His [Swan’s] Tavern sign is in the Antiquarian house.” No such sign, however, is in the present collection of that organization, now known as the Concord Museum, nor is it in possession of the National Park Service.

⁸³ Brooks family genealogical chart by G. Margaret Martin, Lincoln Public Library.

in general, and William Swan in particular, since no documentation exists in the genealogical records of either the Lincoln or the Concord Public Libraries.

It may be surmised from other sources that the Swan household in 1806 consisted of William and Mary, and Mary's five children: Mary (age 13), Ephraim (10), Nathan (7), and twin sons Rufus and Marshall (5). Before the marriage, on April 11, 1806, guardianship of the Meriam children had been appointed by the probate court to Edward Flint. This remained in effect until 1812, when the two oldest children elected William Swan (then described as "yeoman") as their guardian; Swan was also made guardian of the three younger children at that time.⁸⁴ William and Mary had one child of their own, a daughter named Maria Swan, who was born May 30, 1809.⁸⁵

There is no doubt that William and Mary Swan occupied the Meriam House, based on the evidence provided by the tax records. The "Book of the Polls & Estates in Concord for the Year 1806" lists William Swan in Concord for the first time, with the notation "Eph. Meriam's farm" next to his name. The value of Swan's real estate was then assessed at \$96.20, which is the same value that had been assigned to the "Estate of Ephraim Meriam" the previous year. The real estate value was unchanged the following year, in 1807, when William Swan was again listed at the "Ephm Meriam Estate." Thereafter, and until his death in 1822, William Swan's name appears alone in the tax records.

Construction of New Kitchen Addition, Circa 1810

Sometime after April 21, 1806, and before circa 1815, the existing 1 1/2-story kitchen addition was constructed on the back (north) side of the house. This improvement may have been made between 1808 and 1809, when William Swan's tax valuation for real estate changed from \$96.20 to \$102.50; or between 1814 and 1815, when the valuation changed from \$104 to \$179.48.⁸⁶ For simplicity, the date "circa 1810" has been assigned to the addition. No other documentation of the work has been found.

It is thought that this improvement was made after April 21, 1806, based on the description of the house in the probate records of Ephraim Meriam. The widow's dower that was set off on that date distinguished the "upright" part of the house as being separate from the "bedroom in the back part of said house" and the "back kitchen."⁸⁷ It is likely, therefore, that both the bedroom and the kitchen were in a one-story appendage on the back of the house, which was lower than the "upright" part of the house.

⁸⁴ Middlesex County Probate document #15057.

⁸⁵ *Concord, Mass.: Births, Marriages, and Deaths 1635-1850* (Boston: Beacon Press), p. 285 [re: Maria Swan].

⁸⁶ No property is known to have been acquired by William Swan in those years that would account for the higher valuations.

⁸⁷ Middlesex County Probate document #15056.

The work appears to have been done before 1815, as evidenced by the type of cut nails attaching the clapboards to the back side of the addition. These nails, which have been protected from the weather by a later addition, are an early machine-cut type not commonly found after 1815.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the nails attaching the sheathing boards under the clapboards are hand wrought.

The kitchen addition runs the full length of the main house, and extends about 7 feet eastward beyond it, forming a "jog" with a south-facing doorway. Although thus very long (about 45 1/2 feet), the addition is only 11 feet deep. Physical evidence strongly suggests that the kitchen addition was built as one unit, and not by enlarging the earlier one-story lean-to. This evidence includes the post-and-beam framing, with continuous posts on the back (north) side, and regular spacing between the beams of about 10 1/2 feet. The older one-story kitchen and bedroom therefore appear to have been removed prior to construction of the new addition. A new kitchen fireplace and bake oven were probably also built at this time.

As mentioned previously, the addition is of frame construction. Extant today are the original wide sheathing boards, with lime-mortar chinking between the joints. The original clapboards are hand-riven and held with early machine-cut nails. Paint analysis indicates that the clapboards were unpainted for a period of time after installation.

The shed roof of the addition is continuous with the north slope of the roof of the main house. This design was necessary to provide head room in the addition's second-story rooms. The design was accomplished by raising the main roof's rafter ends at the north plate, reducing the pitch of the roof slope. This reframing can be seen in the attic today.

The layout of the addition's interior is spacious, incorporating a partial cellar, three rooms each in the first and second stories, and interior stairways. The cellar, which is under the east half of the addition, was most likely excavated when the new addition was constructed; it almost doubled the size of the old cellar under the main house. Rooms in the first story include a large center kitchen and two smaller end rooms—one at the east end and the other at the west end. A similar layout existed in the second story, where there were a large (windowless) center room and two end rooms. The stairways to the cellar and second story are situated at the east end of the large kitchen. While the location is original, the stairways themselves were replaced in the 1920's.

Finish details of the interior, many of which survive today, included wide pine floorboards, plastered walls and ceilings, wood wainscot, wide vertical pine paneling, and boxed posts and girts. Doors were of mortised construction with four panels, hand-wrought Suffolk latches, and "HL" hinges. A built-in cupboard in one corner of the kitchen appears to be an original feature of the room.

⁸⁸ The characteristics of these nails include rounded tips, irregular heads, and burrs on opposite edges of the nail shank. This indicates that the nails were made from a narrow nail plate, and that the plate was not flipped during manufacture, as were later nails.

Why this new, larger kitchen addition was needed around 1810 is not known. Possibly the old kitchen appendage was in poor repair, or the Swan family felt in need of the additional space that could be provided by a larger house. The household in 1810 consisted of seven or eight people, including William Swan (age 26-45 years), his wife Mary (age 38), and the children Mary (age 17), Ephraim (age 15) and/or Nathan (age 12), Rufus and Marshall (age 9), and Maria (age 1).⁸⁹

Main-House Renovations, Circa 1820

Renovations were made to the main house not long after the new 1 1/2-story addition was built on the back side of the house. This is based on a comparison of the paint layers on the interior woodwork in the kitchen addition with the woodwork installed as part of the house's renovation. The kitchen addition was found to have one more, earlier paint layer than the renovation woodwork, suggesting that it had been installed first, and the renovation woodwork slightly later.

The date "circa 1820" has been assigned to the renovations for two reasons. First, the style of the woodwork moldings may be characterized as "Federal"—a style that was popular from about 1790 to 1830. Second, the tax records of William Swan indicate that his property valuation changed from \$107.20 in 1820 to \$129.65 in 1821. No property transactions are known to have occurred at this time which would account for the change. Although it is not certain that the increase was due to the renovations, it is nevertheless a likely possibility.

The work that was done at this time included the following list of items.

- The walls and ceilings in the first- and second-story rooms of the main house were plastered.
- New woodwork was installed in all the rooms of the main house.
- New interior doors were installed, being of mortised construction with four panels, butt hinges, and Norfolk latches.
- Two new exterior doors were installed on the front side of the house, each having six panels and butt hinges.
- New Federal-style doorway surrounds (i.e., architraves) were added to the exterior sides of the two front doorways.
- New window frames, architraves, and six-over-six sashes were installed in all of the windows of the house, including those of the new kitchen addition.
- The old staircase in the front entry was removed, the walls were furred out and plastered, and a new staircase was installed.

⁸⁹ The Federal Census for 1810 recorded only one unnamed male between the ages of 10 and 16. It is not known if this was Ephraim or Nathan, or an erroneous omission of one of them.

- The old stairway to the cellar, leading from the west parlor, was most likely closed off (having been made obsolete by the new cellar stairway in the kitchen addition).
- A new stairway to the attic, leading from the second story of the new kitchen addition, appears to have replaced an earlier attic stairway at the main stairway.
- The second-story west room in the kitchen addition was finished with plaster and woodwork.

At some point, a small one-story shed addition was built at the east end of the north wall of the circa-1810 kitchen addition. This addition, which exists today, may also have been built circa 1820. The new addition most likely included an attached carriage shed on the east side, which can be seen in the earliest photograph of the house taken sometime between 1885 and 1898 (fig. 5).⁹⁰

The renovations appear to have been an attempt to “modernize” the old house by covering the previously exposed interior framing and by installing stylish new woodwork and windows. The motivation for this updating is not known; perhaps it was in preparation for the marriage of the eldest daughter, Mary, to Nathaniel Ball on September 11, 1821.

The household in 1820 consisted of William Swan (exact age unknown), his wife Mary (48), and children Mary (26), Rufus and Marshall (both 19) and Maria (11). Sons Ephraim and Nathan, both being past of the age of 21, had most likely left home by this time.⁹¹

William Swan’s Will, 1822

William Swan died September 24, 1822, at the age of about 50 years. In his last will and testament, dated February 13, 1822, he left “all [his] real estate in said town of Concord” to his stepson, Ephraim Meriam. To his wife, Mary, was left “all my household furniture and indoor movables of every kind and description excepting my clock.”

Ephraim Meriam was appointed executor November 20, 1822, at which time he was directed to render an inventory of the estate. Whether this was ever done is not known; no inventory survives in the probate records.

⁹⁰ The tax assessment records for the Town of Concord indicate that William Swan was assessed for a “Pleasure Carriage” in 1807 (the first year that carriages were recorded) through 1821; Ephraim Meriam was next assessed for the “Pleasure Carriage” in 1822-1825, and Rufus Meriam was assessed for a “chaise” in 1838-1844 and 1847-1848. While this is of interest, it is not necessarily useful information for dating the attached carriage shed, because the carriage may have been housed originally in the barn.

⁹¹ The Federal Census for 1820 confirms this listing (see Appendix C). Ephraim, it is said, lived at home “until he was nearly, if not quite, twenty-one.” [Source: Grindall Reynolds, “Memoir of Ephraim Merriam,” January 1872, *Memoirs of the Members of the Social Circle in Concord*, 2nd Series, 1795-1840 (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1888), p. 16.]

Ephraim Meriam, Owner

Brief Biography

Ephraim Meriam was born November 26, 1795, and died a bachelor at the age of 47 on April 7, 1843. He was the eldest son of Ephraim and Mary Meriam, and the stepson of William Swan. Ephraim was 27 when his stepfather died in 1822 and left him all his real estate in Concord, including the family house and farm.

Ephraim had moved from that home around the age of 21 (circa 1816) to start a butchering and candle-making business, "Stows & Meriam," with his cousins Nathan and Cyrus Stow. He also speculated in real estate, and is said to have been a successful businessman who had accumulated a sizable wealth by the time of his death in 1843.⁹²

Some other accomplishments of Ephraim Meriam include his involvement in 1828 as an investor in the Milldam Company, which drained the Mill Pond and developed a new business district in town. He was chosen in 1835-1836 as one of a three-member committee to build a monument at the location of the historic North Bridge. The year 1835 is also when he constructed a new house in town, not far from the public common. He served as a state representative for the Democratic Party in 1838, 1839, and 1840, and as a senator in 1841.⁹³

The Meriam House and Property

Although Ephraim Meriam was the owner of record of the Meriam House from 1822 until 1834, when he sold the property to his brother Rufus, there is no evidence that he made any significant renovations to it. In fact, it is unlikely that he lived at the house, except perhaps towards the end of his life, when it is said that "lived to the last in the old homestead with his again widowed mother, and there he died."⁹⁴

It is interesting to note that Ephraim's mother, Mary Swan, was assessed in the property tax records in the year 1829 for the "House, Barn, Sheds & 100a land owned by E. Meriam," suggesting that Ephraim was then not in residence. She is likewise listed in 1830 and 1831, but with no mention of "E. Meriam." Ephraim's brother, Rufus, was next assessed for the property

⁹² It is said that Ephraim started with \$400-\$500, and left his heirs about \$40,000. [Source: Reynolds, p. 242.] An inventory of his estate indicates that in fact his estate was worth \$34,547 at the time of his death. He left his mother \$2,500; he gave his brother Rufus his house and land in Boston, valued at \$2,000; and he gave his sister Maria a woodlot in Lexington worth \$1,800. Sister Mary and brother Nathan also received generous settlements. The remainder of the estate was to be divided equally among the brothers and sisters. [Source: Middlesex County Probate document #37608.]

⁹³ He was also an active member of the church and community. Information on Ephraim Meriam was obtained from Reynolds, and from references in Shattuck (pp. 214 and 351) and Wheeler (*Climate for Freedom*, pp. 170-171).

⁹⁴ Reynolds, p. 243.

beginning in 1832, even though the official conveyance did not occur until 1834.⁹⁵ In addition, the name "Rufus Meriam" appears next to a square designating the Meriam House on the John G. Hales map of Concord dated 1830 (fig. 1).

Exactly where Ephraim Meriam's home was during these years is not known. He constructed a new house near the public common in Concord in 1835, but the tax records for the years 1835-39 indicate that Nathaniel Rice lived there.

The Federal Census does not reveal who was living at the house during the year 1830, since there is no listing for Ephraim Meriam, Rufus Meriam, or Mary Swan. A likely guess, however, is that Mary, then 58, lived here with her son Rufus (29) and her daughter Maria (21).

Even though he was probably living elsewhere, Ephraim consolidated the Meriam's Corner property in 1826 by buying back the corner half-acre lot from Tarrant P. Meriam, who had inherited it from his father John in 1804. It will be remembered that this lot most likely contained the 17th-century buildings of the first John Meriam, and it was here that Josiah Meriam was living in 1775. By 1826, however, it appears that the buildings were either gone, or in dilapidated condition, based on the purchase price of only \$175.⁹⁶ The property was then described as being:

A certain tract or parcel of land situated in the easterly part of...Concord containing half an acre be the same more or less, bounded as follows beginning at a heap of stones on the easterly side of Bedford road, and running on Ephraim Meriams land about five rods to a heap of stones, then bounded easterly of said Ephraims land to a heap of stones on the northerly side of the County road leading to Lexington then bounded on said County road to the aforementioned road leading to Bedford then on said Bedford road to the bounds first mentioned...meaning to convey all the land of a house lot and garden which Mr. Josiah Meriam conveyed to Mr. John Meriam....⁹⁷

The old house was most certainly gone by 1830, based on the map by John G. Hales that shows only two structures at Meriam's Corner: the house of "Rufus Meriam" on the Bedford Road, and "School No. 2" on the Lexington & Boston Road, just east of the Mill Brook (fig. 1).

⁹⁵ The tax assessment records for the years 1826-1829 describe the buildings as a "House, Barn, [&] Sheds," while the tax records for 1830-1834 list a "House, Barn, [&] Shed."

⁹⁶ The appraised value of the land in 1805, which included the "house, barn & land lately purchased of Josiah Meriam," was \$400. [Source: Middlesex County Probate document #15076.]

⁹⁷ Middlesex County Deed, Book 267, p. 156.

Rufus Meriam, Owner

Deed Dated 1834

Rufus Meriam, the last Meriam family member to own the Meriam House, purchased the property from his brother Ephraim for \$3,300 in 1834. The deed for the transaction, dated February 12, describes the home lot as follows:

All that certain farm situated in the easterly part of said Concord called the Meriam Farm, viz: one piece called the house [lot] containing about sixteen acres, bounded northerly by Bedford road easterly by land of Andrew Afridson, southerly by land of Stephen Patch, and westerly by the county road from Concord to Lexington...with all the buildings thereon standing....⁹⁸

Also conveyed at this time were other lands in Concord called the "Hill Piece," the "Home field & old Garden" (16 acres), the "Great Fields" (8 acres), the "House Swamp & Hartwell Pasture (33 acres), the "Virginia Meadow" (12 acres) and the "River Meadow" (3 acres).

New Schoolhouse, 1852-1854

By 1846, the schoolhouses that had been built in 1799, including the schoolhouse at Meriam's Corner, were considered to be obsolete. So reported the School Committee in its annual report for the year ending April 1, 1846:

We are behind the age. Most of our school-houses were built some forty years ago, and were at that time among the best. But there they have stood and the tide of improvement, for forty years has swept by them.... They all stand on, and open directly into the street.⁹⁹

It was not until six years later, however, that a plot of land was purchased by the inhabitants of Concord for a new schoolhouse at Meriam's Corner. The deed for the transaction, dated December 8, 1852, identifies the grantor as Rufus Meriam and the purchase price as \$100. The bounds of the land were defined as follows:

Beginning at the westerly corner of the premises of land of said Meriam thence northerly on said Meriam's land to a post set in the ground; thence easterly on land of said Meriam in a line parallel with and ten rods northerly of said road eight rods to a post set in the ground; thence at a right angle with said line to the road; thence on said road to the bound first mentioned; said lot to be eight rods wide and ten rods long across the middle thereof and containing eighty rods; it being understood and agreed that the grantees

⁹⁸ Middlesex County Deed, Book 1,160, p. 21.

⁹⁹ *The Annual Report of the School Committee of Concord for the Year Ending April 1st, 1846* (Concord: Printed at the Freeman Office, 1846), p. 9.

shall hereafter make and maintain a suitable division fence between this lot and land of said Meriam, so long as they shall occupy and use the same for a school house lot.¹⁰⁰

No records of the actual building of the new schoolhouse are known, although construction is likely to have commenced in the spring or summer of the following year. It appears to have been completed by September 1853, based on the annual report of the School Committee for the year ending April 1, 1854:

District No. 2. East Quarter.

The commencement of the Winter Term was signalized by removing to the new and beautiful School-house just completed by the town....¹⁰¹

No mention appears in the records of the school committee as to the fate of the old District No. 2 schoolhouse next to the brook. It appears to have remained standing for at least a year, based on a survey by Henry David Thoreau dated June 26, 1855. For more details on the survey, see the section that follows.

Henry David Thoreau Survey, 1855

Henry David Thoreau surveyed Lexington Road at Meriam's Corner in the spring of 1855. His drawing, labeled "Plan of The Road & Watering Place at the East Quarter School House, Concord Mass., Surveyed by Henry D. Thoreau, June 26," appears to be a field sketch, based on the presence of survey lines (fig. 2). While the year on this sketch is worn and illegible, a final version (without survey lines) is dated November 9, 1855 (fig. 3). It was therefore concluded that the original survey was probably also done in 1855.

Features shown on the plan include the "Road to Concord," the "Road to Bedford," an "Elm" at the intersection of the roads, the south perimeter of "Rufus Meriam's Land," the "Site of School House," and the "Brook" to the west side of the schoolhouse. Both the location and size of the schoolhouse, with its front "porch" and side "shed," strongly suggest that this is the old schoolhouse built in 1799. The approximate location of the new schoolhouse built in 1853 may be seen on the plan dated November 9, which has a penciled note in the far left margin that reads "School House." The new schoolhouse, in other words, was located to the east of the old schoolhouse.

¹⁰⁰ Middlesex County Deed, Book 639, p. 167.

¹⁰¹ *Annual Report of the School Committee of the Town of Concord For the Year Ending April 1, 1854* (Concord: Silas B. Wilde, Printer, 1854), p. 9.

Most significant, however, and the reason for which the survey was most likely commissioned, is the delineation of the old and new road beds of the "Road to Concord" (i.e., Lexington Road). The old road, as defined by the "line of old walls," was located farther to the north, and made a sharp turn to the southeast just past the old schoolhouse.¹⁰² The "old bank wall" that had been on the south side of the brook appears to have become the north bank wall when the road was relocated; "new wall[s]" are also shown on either side of the brook, on the north side of the new road. The area between the old walls and the new walls was estimated by Thoreau to be about 21 rods.

The reason why the road was relocated in 1855 is not known. Perhaps the motivation was simply to straighten it out as part of a general road improvement project. Interestingly, the small amount of land acquired by Rufus Meriam as a result of this alteration is not reflected in subsequent deeds for the property at Meriam's Corner.

Rufus Meriam Household: 1840, 1850, and 1860

Rufus Meriam, like his brother Ephraim, never married. He appears to have lived with his stepsister, Maria Swan, until her marriage at the age of 36 to Darius Hatch, on May 27, 1845. His mother, Mary, also stayed at home until her death at the age of 75 on May 9, 1847.

The Federal Census indicates that three people other than Rufus, Maria, and Mary were living in the household headed by Rufus Meriam in 1840. These were two unnamed males between the ages of 40 and 50 years, and one female between 10 and 15 years of age.¹⁰³ One of the men may have been brother Ephraim Meriam, who was 45 in 1840, and who is said to have "lived to the last in the old homestead with his again widowed mother."¹⁰⁴ The identity of the two other people remains a mystery.

By 1850, Rufus was living with no family members, according to the Federal Census for that year. This was the first year in which details, such as names and profession, were provided by the census. Rufus was then listed as being a farmer who was 50 years of age, born in Massachusetts, and with real estate valued at \$10,000. He was apparently living with two other people: Susan Hosmer and Sumner Hardy. Hosmer was a 34-year-old female, with no designated profession, who had been born in Massachusetts. Hardy was a 55-year-old male, also with no designated profession, who was also Massachusetts-born.¹⁰⁵ The likely relationship of these people to Rufus was that Hosmer was the domestic help, while Hardy provided assistance with the farm.

¹⁰² As explained in the section "School House Constructed, 1799," the sharp turn in the road is believed to have been an earlier change that was made circa 1799. Before 1799, the road appears to have traveled in a straight easterly direction, based on probate description of the property dated 1806 that notes "where the old road was trod." [Source: Middlesex County Probate document #15056.]

¹⁰³ Federal Census Microfilm M704-188, p. 349. See also Appendix C.

¹⁰⁴ Reynolds, p. 243.

¹⁰⁵ Federal Census Microfilm M432-323, p. 112. See also Appendix C.

The year 1860 is remarkable for being when the Federal Census recorded 13 people as living with Rufus Meriam at "Dwelling house #169." Two of these were listed with Rufus as part of "Family #177," including Lill Hatch, a 45-year-old female domestic from Vermont; and Sumner Hindy, a 59-year-old farmer from Massachusetts.

Eleven other people were listed as residing at Rufus Meriam's "Dwelling house" under "Family #178." These included a family from Ireland and their five Massachusetts-born children; a younger couple from Ireland with no children; and two older and apparently unrelated females, both born in Massachusetts.

The value of Rufus Meriam's real estate in 1860 was \$4,050, according to the Federal Census. Also listed as owning real estate were Sumner Hindy (value, \$50) and Edmund Carver (value, \$1,000); the residence of both, however, appears to have been the Meriam House.

Kitchen Sketch, Circa 1865

The only known early interior view of the Meriam House is a sketch of the kitchen fireplace wall entitled "Merriam Interior Kitchen" (fig. 4). The drawing was by artist Mary C. Wheeler (1846-1920), and was later photographed by Alfred Hosmer (1851-1903).¹⁰⁶ Mary Wheeler was a Concord native who attended the Concord public schools and the Abbott Academy in Andover. She taught in the Concord schools for two years, circa 1865-1866. The kitchen sketch is believed to have been made about this time, because Miss Wheeler later relocated to Providence, Rhode Island.¹⁰⁷

Nothing is known of the circumstances surrounding the making of the sketch, i.e., whether it was intended to be used as an illustration for a book or magazine, or was simply a school exercise. It is also not known how Miss Wheeler happened to be acquainted with Rufus Meriam, or any of the people living with him at the time.

Whatever the case, the kitchen sketch is of particular significance for being what appears to be a highly detailed and accurate portrayal of the kitchen before it was remodeled in the 1950's. The main subject is the large kitchen fireplace with its simple wood mantel, deep brick hearth, and bake oven offset to one side with a storage area below. Two small doors are located immediately above the mantel shelf, which have opposing side hinges and simple swivel latches. A candle with reflective backplate sits on the mantel shelf, and a fireplace shovel, tongs, and bellows are conveniently located nearby. A fire burns within the fireplace, where there are a pair of andirons and a crane hinged from the left jamb.

¹⁰⁶ File on Concord Photographers, Special Collections, CFPL. The photograph by Hosmer is a black-and-white view. The whereabouts of the original sketch is unknown.

¹⁰⁷ An obituary dated March 11, 1920, describes Miss Wheeler as an accomplished artist. It notes that she moved to Providence, Rhode Island, after teaching in the Concord schools. She went to Germany in 1870 to study art for two years, and also studied in Paris from 1876 to 1882. She founded "Miss Wheeler's School" for drawing and painting in Providence in 1889. She died in Providence in 1920 at the age of 75. [Source: *The Providence Journal*, March 11, 1920, Scrapbook.]

The floorboards on either side of the hearth are wide and aligned in an east-west direction. Wide boards also comprise the wainscot at the lower back wall. The upper walls are notable for being plain (i.e., with no stencil or wallpaper) and a lighter color than the surrounding woodwork.

Recessed on the right side of the fireplace is a doorway with a four-panel door and Suffolk latch. The orientation of the latch (on the right stile, with the thumb latch on the kitchen side) indicates the door was hinged on the left side and swung outward into the adjoining room. A ceiling beam, oriented in a north-south direction, frames into a deep header above the doorway.

The kitchen today is little changed from the sketch, with only a few exceptions. The two doors and frame are missing from above the fireplace, as is the four-panel door to the right side of the fireplace. Also, while wide pine floorboards are in the room today, they are replacements installed in the 1950's.

Death of Rufus Meriam, 1870

Rufus Meriam died a bachelor on March 3, 1870, just before his 69th birthday. He left an estate worth \$46,223.79 to his three surviving siblings: Mary Ball, his widowed sister; Marshall Meriam, his twin brother of New Hampshire; and Maria Hatch, his half-sister. A schedule of Rufus's personal and real estate indicates that he had invested most of his wealth in railroads and banking institutions.¹⁰⁸ An itemized list of his assets appears in the probate record as follows:¹⁰⁹

PERSONAL ESTATE

Household Furniture	55.00
Live Stock, 13 Cows	520.00
Hay, Grain & Fodder	259.75
Farming Tools	69.00
86 Shares Boston & Albany Railroad	12,298.00
140 " Fitchburg "	18,620.00
10 " Northern "	1,100.00
16 " Vermont Central "	000.00
6 " Malden & Melrose Horse "	000.00
13 " Concord National Bank	1,456.00
3 " Exchange " "	459.00

¹⁰⁸ The tax assessment records indicate that Rufus began to invest in railroads in 1844, the year after his brother Ephraim's death.

¹⁰⁹ Middlesex County Probate document #37,626. John S. Keyes, in *Houses and Owners or Occupants in Concord 1885* (Concord Free Public Library, Typescript, 1940) wrote that Rufus "was a bachelor who died worth \$30 to \$50,000, and his whole wardrobe household furniture and personal effects were appraised at less than \$100" (p. 212). No documentation is known, however, of the value of Rufus's "wardrobe" and "personal effects."

Deposit in Middlesex Inst. for Savings	1,231.00
Cash in Concord National Bank	2,151.87
Cash on hand	144.17
Pew in Unitarian Church	60.00
	<hr/>
	38,423.79

REAL ESTATE

Homestead Farm & Buildings, & 90 Acres	5,000.00
Dwelling House & Land in Boston	2,800.00
	<hr/>
	7,800.00

Unfortunately, no Meriam family members appear to have been interested in maintaining the old family farm, and it was sold the following year, on April 29, 1871. What use was made of the house in the interim period, from March 1870 through April 1871, is not known. Most likely the house was either leased or left vacant.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ The Federal Census for 1870 was conducted after Rufus Meriam's death, so no record of the occupation of the house for this year could be ascertained.

PLAN OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD, MASS.

IN THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX.

Surveyed by John G. Hales.
Pub^d by Lemuel Shattuck - Boston.

1830.

Fendleton's Lithography, Boston.

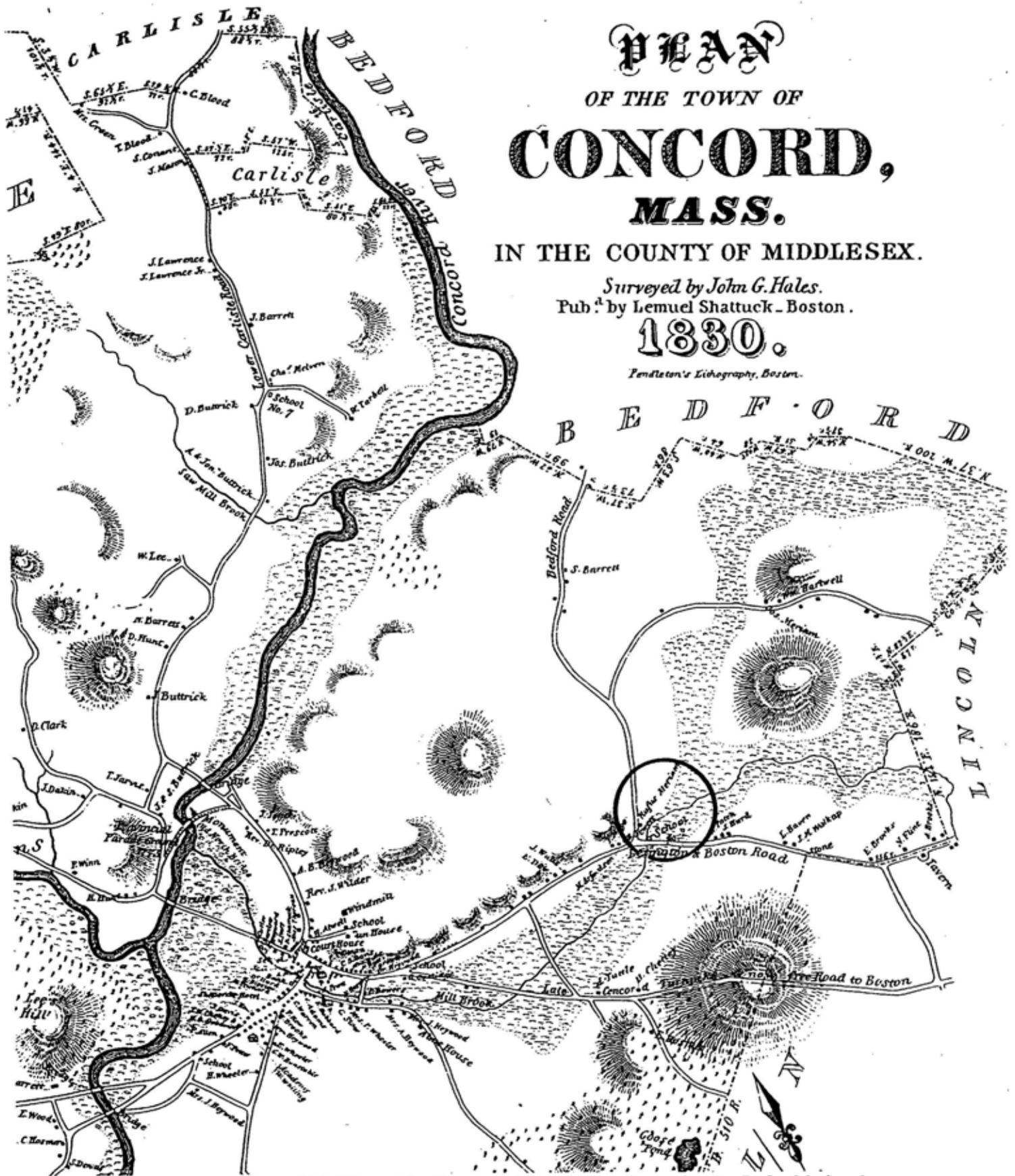


Figure 1. Detail of the 1830 "Plan of the Town of Concord, Mass." showing the Rufus Meriam house and School No. 2.

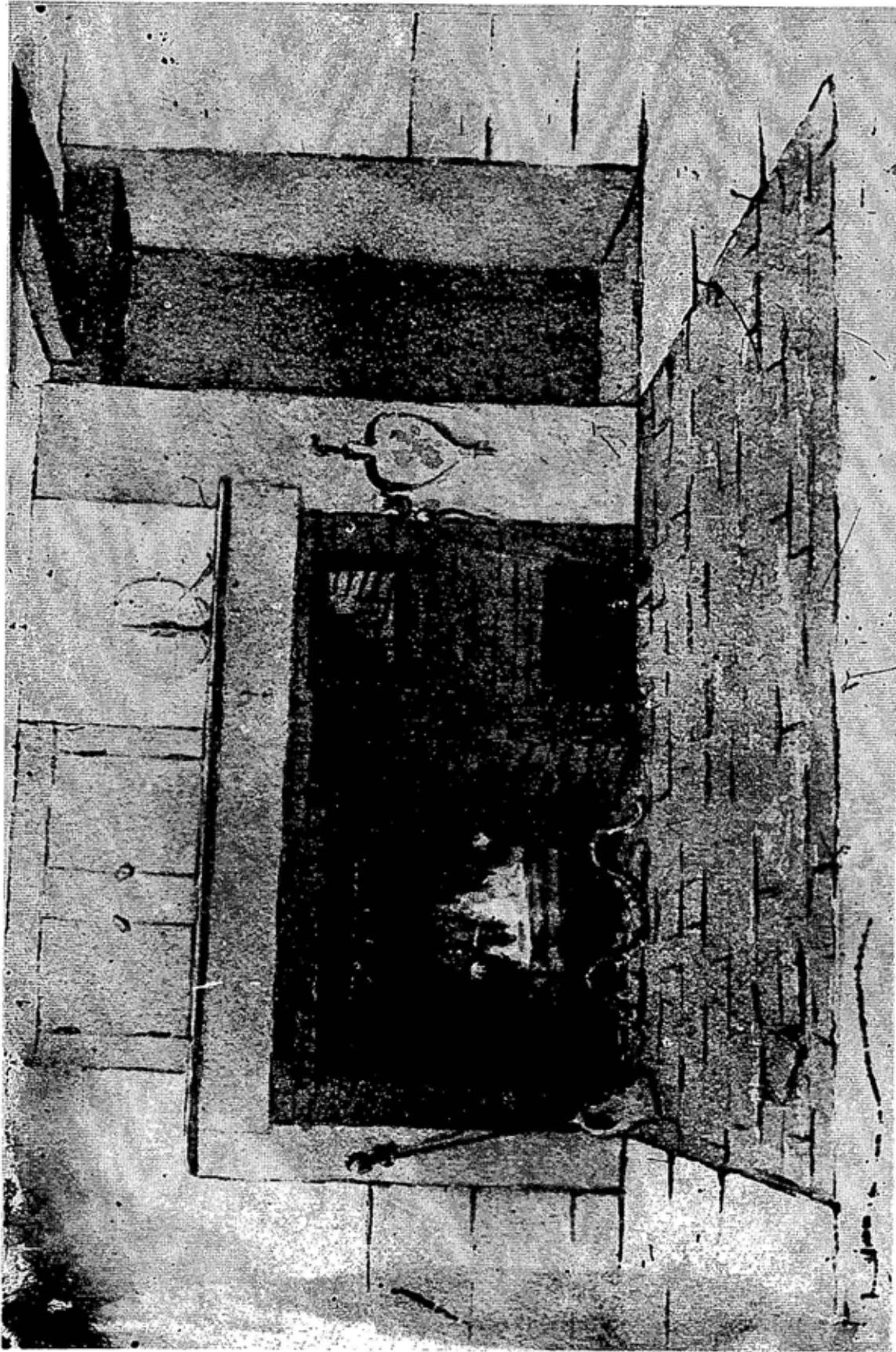


Figure 4. Photograph of sketch by Mary Wheeler, showing the Meriam House kitchen fireplace, circa 1865.

BURKE FAMILY OWNERSHIP

The Burke family, which had its roots in Ireland, owned the Meriam House for two generations, from 1871 to 1951. The first generation, Thomas and Rose Burke, lived at the house and worked the farm from 1871 until their deaths in 1921. The property was next owned by the Burkes' daughter-in-law, Ellen T. Burke, who lived with her husband Thomas J. in the new house across Old Bedford Road. The house thus became a rental property, which was leased to tenants from 1922 to 1951.

Thomas Burke

Purchase of the Meriam Farm, 1871

A portion of the late Rufus Meriam's farm was sold on April 29, 1871, to Thomas Burke of Concord for \$3,500. The total amount of land was 50 acres more or less, which represented about half of the total farm at that time.

The one-third part of the farm belonging to Rufus Meriam's heir and sister, Mary Ball, was sold at public auction for one-third the total price, or \$1,166.67. Mary was then 78 years old and judged to be "insane." The auction was advertised in two issues of the newspaper, the *Massachusetts Ploughman and New England Journal of Agriculture*—one dated April 15, the other printed on the day of the auction, April 29. The announcement read as follows:

Guardian's Sale

Will be sold at Public Auction by License of the Probate Court for the County of Middlesex, on SATURDAY, the twenty-ninth day of April, A.D., 1871, at three o'clock P.M., all the interest of Mary Ball, of said Concord, an insane person, in the following described real-estate, situated in the easterly part of said Concord, viz. A certain farm containing about eighty-nine acres, more or less, lying on both sides of the Bedford road, with all the buildings thereon. Also about twelve acres called the Virginia Meadow, bounded by land of Charles Jager, William Tibbets and John Algeo. Also about three acres of River Meadow, bounded easterly and southerly on land late of Thomas M. Balcom, northerly on Concord River and westerly on land formerly of John Watts. Sale to be on the first described parcel.

GEO. M. BROOKS, Guardian
Concord, April 8th, 1871 ap15-3t¹¹¹

¹¹¹ The *Massachusetts Ploughman* was published in Boston, and is on microfilm at the Boston Public Library. The deed for the sale, dated April 29, 1871, says that George Brooks was "licensed and empowered" by the probate court to convey the real estate on July 5, 1870, and that Thomas Burke was the highest bidder at the auction. [Source: Middlesex County Deed, Book 1164, p.450.]

The remaining two-thirds of the farm were sold to Thomas Burke by Rufus Meriam's brother and half-sister, Marshall Meriam and Maria Hatch, for \$2,333.33. The deed for this transaction, dated April 29, 1871, describes the home-lot portion of the farm as:

A certain parcel of land with a dwelling house, barn and out buildings thereon, and bounded beginning at a corner of the old road leading to Bedford and the Great County road to Boston; thence easterly on said great road to land of the Town of Concord; thence northerly easterly and southerly on land of said Town of Concord [the schoolhouse lot] to said great road; thence easterly on said great road to land late of Peletiah T. Hall; thence north easterly on land late of said Hall to land of Sampson Mason; thence northwesterly on land of said Mason to said old road to Bedford; thence southerly on said old road to Bedford to the bounds first mentioned.¹¹²

The transaction also included two other parcels: one on the opposite (west) side of the Bedford Road, and the other in the Dam Meadow.¹¹³

Thomas and Rose Burke appear to have had no livestock on the farm initially, based on the tax assessment for 1871 that recorded only the "House, Barn & Shed" valued at \$1,300, and "Part of Meriam est., 50 acres," valued at \$2,200. It is likely, on the other hand, that they made some repairs to the buildings, which may have included giving the exterior of the old house a coat of yellow paint. The color yellow is mentioned in a memoir written in January 1872, in which the house was described the house as "the time-worn yellow house now standing at the corner of Lexington and old Bedford roads."¹¹⁴

Thomas and Rose Burke

Thomas Burke was one month from his 28th birthday when he purchased the old Meriam farm in April 1871. His family then included his wife, Rose A., and a young son, John H., who was 1 1/2 years old.

Thomas and Rose had immigrated to the United States from Ireland separately. Thomas came to this country from the County Galway in 1861, when he was 18 years old. Rose, who was from the County Fermonagh, followed several years later in 1864, when she was 22. They most likely met in their new homeland, where they were wed in 1869.¹¹⁵ Thomas and Rose had four

¹¹² Middlesex County Deed, Book 1164, p. 448.

¹¹³ While the size of each subparcel is not defined in the deed, property tax records dated 1880 and later record Thomas Burke's "homestead" as being 42 acres, and the "Dam meadow" as 8 acres.

¹¹⁴ Reynolds, p. 241.

¹¹⁵ Birth and death record-cards of the Town of Concord for the years prior to 1914, in the Special Collections Division of the Concord Free Public Library; also, Federal Census information for the year 1900 (Microfilm T623-658, p. 65-B).

children, all born in the United States. They were John H. (born December 1869); Annie W. (June 1871); Thomas J. (March 1874); and James E. (November 1877).¹¹⁶

Thomas Burke worked as a "farmer," according to the Federal Census records for the years 1880, 1890, 1900, and 1910. One local historian described Burke in 1885 as "an Irishman who sells milk in the village."¹¹⁷ This is confirmed by the Concord Directory for 1886, which listed Thomas Burke as both a "farmer and milk man." Later directories, however, noted Burke as being a "farmer" only.¹¹⁸

The tax assessment records for the years 1871 through 1921 document the livestock on the Burke farm. The farm always seems to have had some number of horses, cows, and yearling cows. Two swine were counted on the farm in 1872 only. Fifty "hens" were added in 1880 (called "fowl" beginning in 1894), and continued to be listed for most years through 1918. The largest number of livestock is listed for the year 1889, when there were two horses, nine cows (which included three 2-year-olds), and 75 hens. The herd of cows was never more than 11 head (tax year 1886), and the fowl never numbered more than 75. The Burkes had only one horse during the years 1872-1887, one or two horses between 1888-1894, three horses in 1895-1901, and four horses in 1902 and 1903. As Thomas and Rose got older, the number of animals decreased considerably, so that by 1919 there was only one horse, one cow, and no fowl.

Thomas and Rose raised their family and lived out their lives on the old Meriam farm. Their eldest son, John H., died in 1901 in Boston at the age of 32. Annie W., who never married, taught in the public schools and lived at home for most of her life. Thomas J. built a house on his father's land across the road in 1903, and worked on the Burke farm. James E. renovated and occupied the abandoned schoolhouse on the property in 1903, but lived there for only a short time. Thomas and Rose both died in 1921: Thomas on March 10 at the age of 80, and Rose on April 15 at the age of 86.

Memorial Stone, 1885

Seven memorial tablets were erected in various locations in Concord in 1885, in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the settlement of the town.¹¹⁹ One of these was located in the stone wall¹²⁰ at the southwest corner of Thomas Burke's property at Meriam's Corner.

¹¹⁶ The birth dates were obtained from the Federal Census of 1900.

¹¹⁷ Keyes, p. 212.

¹¹⁸ The later directories, which are in the Special Collections of the CFPL, are dated 1892, 1896, 1901, 1905-1906, 1909-1910, 1917, and 1921.

¹¹⁹ William W. Wheildon, *New Chapter in the History of the Concord Fight: Groton Minute-Men at the North Bridge, April 19, 1775* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1885), p. 24.

¹²⁰ It will be remembered that Thoreau identified this as a "new wall" on his survey of 1855.

The memorial is a large boulder, with its south-facing side recessed, smooth-planed, and chiseled with the following inscription:

MERIAM'S CORNER

THE BRITISH TROOPS
RETREATING FROM THE
OLD NORTH BRIDGE
WERE HERE ATTACKED IN FLANK
BY THE MEN OF CONCORD
AND NEIGHBORING TOWNS
AND DRIVEN UNDER A HOT FIRE
TO CHARLESTOWN

The house at Meriam's Corner became a popular subject for photographers after the installation of the memorial stone. The most common view shows the stone in the foreground and the Meriam House in the background. The earliest-known photograph of the house, believed to have been taken sometime between 1885 and 1898, is such a composition (fig. 5).

New Barn, 1898-1899

An early barn existed in 1806 (and perhaps as early as 1775) on the east side of Old Bedford Road, according to the probate documents of Ephraim Meriam.¹²¹ Furthermore, the earliest photograph of the house shows what appears to be a barn behind the Meriam House (fig. 5). The Burkes' granddaughter, Alice Burke Hargrove, also recalls being told that the "old barn" had been on the north adjacent lot, although she has no personal memory of it.¹²²

All later photographs of the house do not show any structures behind the house, indicating the barn had been removed. In fact, it was most likely replaced by a new barn located elsewhere on the Burke property.

Thomas Burke's tax assessment for the year 1898 lists a "House & Barn," valued at \$1,000. The tax assessment for the following year, however, itemizes the "Old House" and the "Barn" separately, with the house valued at \$900 and the barn at \$400. Similar listings for selected other structures in the 1899 assessment are not increased in value, suggesting that a significant improvement had occurred at the Burke farm.¹²³ Taken together with the evidence in the early photographs of the house, one may conclude that the old barn was demolished and replaced by a new barn in a different location.

¹²¹ Middlesex County Probate document #15056, for Ephraim Meriam (1764-1803).

¹²² Conversation with Barbara Yocum, August 17, 1993. See Appendix D.

¹²³ William Buckley, for example, was assessed \$1,250 for his house and barn in 1898; the 1899 assessment valued the house at \$1,000 and the barn at \$250.

Interviews with Alice Burke Hargrove and long-time neighbor Salvatore Muscato locate Thomas Burke's barn on the west side of Old Bedford Road, opposite the Meriam House.¹²⁴ The site of this barn, which was replaced by a smaller structure in 1940-1941, is evident by the remains of its stone foundation. No structures are standing on the site today, which is overgrown with weeds, nor are any photographs of the circa-1898 Burke barn known.

New Front Doorway, Circa 1900

A modern new doorway replaced the circa-1820 Federal-style doorway of the Meriam House around 1900, based on the photographic documentation. This occurred after the old barn had been removed from behind the house circa 1898, and before electrical poles and wires were installed on Old Bedford Road in 1900-1901. A date of "circa 1900" has therefore been assigned to the alteration.

The new doorway architrave was plain compared to the earlier classical surround, with a simple pediment at the top. The new door was glazed and paneled, with four panels below the glass and two panels above it. A clear view of the altered doorway was captured in a photograph of Thomas Burke dated circa 1910 (fig. 15).

Local historian Ruth R. Wheeler wrote the following in 1957 about the front and side doorways:

Mrs. Burke, Sr. [Rose] told Mrs. Daniel Lothrop that there was a bullet hole made in 1775 in the [South]-East door and the presumption was that a souvenir hunter had bought the door which was replaced by the old front door[,] where a new door with a glass panel was substituted about 1905 [sic].

In other words, the southeast side door appears to have been sold; the old front door was moved to the southeast doorway; and a new glass-panel doorway was installed in the front doorway. Although not mentioned, it is possible that the front doorway's Federal architrave was also sold to the same "souvenir hunter."

An examination of the existing southeast door confirms that this is in fact the original six-panel front door. Whether or not the door that was sold had an authentic "bullet hole made in 1775" is questionable, however, because the doorway is part of the large kitchen addition built circa 1810. It is possible, although not likely, that an old door from the house had been installed in the new southeast doorway circa 1810.

¹²⁴ Conversation with Salvatore Muscato of 45 Old Bedford Rd., August 4, 1993; and with Alice Burke Hargrove of 82 Old Bedford Rd., August 17, 1993.

Electrical Wiring, 1900-1901

Poles for electric lines were installed on the east side of Old Bedford Road to Meriam's Corner in 1900-1901.¹²⁵ Photographs taken shortly after indicate that two electrical poles were placed on the short stretch of road between the Meriam House and the memorial stone at the corner. The house was presumably connected to the electrical lines at this time.

It is interesting to note that one colorized post card of the house, taken sometime after the new Burke house was built in 1903-1904, shows no electrical poles on Old Bedford Road (fig. 14). The likely explanation is that the poles were considered to be unsightly and were artistically "removed," using a technique such as airbrushing.

Thomas J. Burke House, 1903-1904

A new house was erected in 1903-1904 on Old Bedford Road, across from the Meriam-Burke House, by Thomas J. Burke—the son of Thomas and Rose Burke.

The house had not yet been built (or at least completed) by the time of the tax valuation of May 1, 1903, in which no listing appears for Thomas J. Burke. Construction was certainly underway, however, by April 1, 1904, when the senior Burkes conveyed 3 acres of land "with buildings" to their son.¹²⁶ The house appears to have been completed by May 1, 1904, when the tax assessment for that year listed Thomas J. Burke as having a house valued at \$1,500, on a 3-acre lot valued at \$300.

Thomas J. Burke probably built the house for his new bride, Ellen T. Dee, whom he wed on December 31, 1903. Thomas J. and Ellen raised their five children here: Katherine A. (born 1905), John H. (1907), Mary Alice (1909), Thomas J., Jr. (1914), and Gerard J. (1916).¹²⁷

The earliest-known photograph of the new house is a post card view of the south elevation dated sometime before November 6, 1910 (fig. 14). The style of the 2 1/2-story house is Dutch Colonial, having a gambrel roof, shed dormers, and a large front porch. The stone foundation had been built using some of the stones from the wall on the east side of Old Bedford Road, between the Meriam-Burke house and the memorial stone.¹²⁸ The shingle siding was originally stained green.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Donna Salvey, Concord Municipal Light Company, to Barbara Yocum, Nov. 29, 1993. Ms. Salvey obtained the information from the "Commissioner's Report."

¹²⁶ Middlesex County Deed, Book 3090, p. 154; the sales price was "\$1.00 and other considerations."

¹²⁷ Records of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Special Collections, CFPL.

¹²⁸ Alice Burke Hargrove to Barbara Yocum, Sept. 21, 1993.

¹²⁹ The original color of siding shingles was observed by restoration carpenters, who replaced the old shingles with new shingles in 1993. The house was painted brown with white trim in 1993.

Schoolhouse Remodeled as Residence, 1903-1904

Thomas Burke purchased the old circa-1853 East Quarter School House, and its 80-square-rod lot, from "the Inhabitants of Concord" on September 30, 1893, for \$500. He thus reclaimed the land that had been sold in 1852 by Rufus Meriam to the Town of Concord for the purpose of building the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse was most likely abandoned by 1893, based on the deed of that date; it notes, "said school house and lot not being in use now for school purposes."¹³⁰

Thomas Burke appears to have made no improvements to the old schoolhouse during the period 1894-1903, according to the tax valuations for the "School House" and its lot. These valuations were \$275/\$200 for the years 1894-1895, and \$300/\$100 for the years 1896-1903. The building may have been left vacant or used for storage during that time.

Thomas Burke finally conveyed the lot "with the building thereon" to his son, James E. Burke, on October 24, 1903.¹³¹ Two months later, James obtained a mortgage for \$1,000 from the Middlesex Institution for Savings.¹³² The money was apparently used to renovate the old school building as a house, based on the tax assessment dated May 1, 1904, that lists James E. Burke as having a "House School" valued at \$1,200, and a lot valued at \$200.

A local history of Concord, which was annotated in 1915, noted the following about the old schoolhouse on Lexington Road:

The school-house was bought some fifteen or eighteen years ago by James Burke, and remodeled into a dwelling. After a short time it was sold again, and is now owned by a Mrs. Hartwell and occupied by a tenant.¹³³

James Burke, in fact, had his mortgage foreclosed on April 18, 1905; Carrie W. Hartwell became the owner of record on July 3, 1915.¹³⁴ The remodeled schoolhouse was next owned by Ernest R. Greene (1919), Dennis and Mildred Horne (1924), Antonio Palumbo (1926), Joseph Puccia (1942), and Frank and Maria C. Palumbo (1945-).¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Middlesex County Deed, Book 2228, p. 481. Burke obtained a mortgage of \$250 from Prescott Keyes, which is recorded in Book 2228, p. 482. The discharge of the mortgage is recorded in Book 2585, p. 440.

¹³¹ Middlesex County Deed, Book 3068, p. 40; the sales price was \$1.

¹³² Middlesex County Deed, Book 3075, p. 391.

¹³³ Edward Jarvis, *Houses and People in Concord, 1810 to 1820* (typescript, 1882; annotated by Adams Tolman, 1915), p. 125.

¹³⁴ Middlesex County Mortgage, Book 3982, p. 352.

¹³⁵ Middlesex County Deeds, Book 4279, p. 273; Book 4799, p. 47; and Book 4944, p. 98; the ownership of Joseph Puccia, and Frank and Maria Palumbo was deduced from the tax assessment records.

New Bathroom, Circa 1903-1904

Mary Alice Burke, younger daughter of Thomas J. and Ellen T. Burke, and granddaughter of Thomas and Rose Burke, is now Alice Burke Hargrove. She recalled in 1993 that her grandfather had installed a second-story bathroom in the house (see Appendix D). Before then, an "inside-outside" toilet had been located in the carriage shed, in the front southeast corner.

The exact date of this improvement is not known. Surviving physical evidence is not helpful, because the bathroom was later remodeled in the 1950's. A feasible date, however, is 1903-1904, when Thomas Burke's sons were building a new house across the street and remodeling the old schoolhouse as a residence. It seems likely that some renovation work may also have taken place at the old Meriam-Burke house at that time.

Remembrances of Alice Burke Hargrove

Alice Burke Hargrove, who now lives on Old Bedford Road in the house north of the Meriam-Burke House, has vivid memories of the house when her grandparents lived there. These she shared with Barbara Yocum during two brief visits to the Meriam-Burke House on August 17, 1993, and September 21, 1993. Transcripts of the information conveyed by Mrs. Hargrove may be found in Appendix D of this report.

Mrs. Hargrove also generously loaned copies of four photographs that show Burke family members and the Meriam-Burke House. All four views are included in this report as figures 11, 13, 15 and 16.

Deaths of Thomas and Rose Burke, 1921

Thomas and Rose Burke both died in 1921, within one month of each other: Thomas on March 10, and Rose on April 15. Throughout their lives, from 1871 until 1921, they had made their home the Meriam-Burke House at Meriam's Corner. The Burkes' daughter, Annie A., appears to have remained at the house for at least a short while, based on the tax assessment dated April 1, 1922, that lists her at the house on Old Bedford Road.

Ellen Burke

Deeds Dated 1922

The Meriam-Burke farm was purchased by Thomas J. Dee from the administrators of the Burke estate in 1922. Dee, described as "being unmarried," was most likely a relative of Ellen T. Burke, Thomas J. Burke's wife, whose maiden name was "Dee."¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Middlesex County Deed, Book 4569, p. 384.

Ellen T. Burke became the next owner of record, buying the property for "one dollar" on December 21, 1922. The sale was subject to a mortgage, held by Dee, for the amount of \$8,000.¹³⁷ The property was then described as "A certain parcel of land containing in whole fifty acres more or less, with a dwelling-house, barn and outbuildings thereon...." Excluded were the former schoolhouse lot, conveyed to James Burke in 1903, and the 3-acre parcel across the street, conveyed to Thomas J. Burke in 1904.

Tenants, 1925-1951

Ellen T. Burke lived across the road from the Meriam-Burke House in the house built in 1903-1904 by her husband, Thomas J. Burke. The Meriam-Burke House was leased to tenants during most of the years she owned the property, 1922-1951. Alice Burke Hargrove remembered the names of five of the families who leased the house. These were: Curtains, Willard, Marks, Uhler, and DeCost.¹³⁸

Subsequent research in the Concord Free Public Library identified the following tenants as recorded in the "List of Persons Residing in Town of Concord" for the years 1921-1951:¹³⁹

<u>NAME, AGE & OCCUPATION</u>	<u>DATE(S)</u>
John H. Driscoll (60, Farmer) Perry Kent, Farmer (41, Farmer)	1921-1922 ¹⁴⁰ 1921
Uhler, Kathleen (25, Housewife) Uhler, Alfred (37, Dealer in Antiques)	1925
Burke, Annie W.	1926
Willard, Capitola (40, Housewife) Willard, Edgar L. (40, Salesman)	1928
Marks, Mabel W. (49, Housewife) Marks, Louis (57, Retired)	1929-1931

¹³⁷ Middlesex County Deed, Book 4569, p. 384.

¹³⁸ Conversation with Barbara Yocum, August 17, 1993. See Appendix D.

¹³⁹ The lists are dated April 1st for the years 1921-1934, and January 1st for the years 1935-1951. No addresses are given on Old Bedford Road, but it appears that the occupants of the Meriam-Burke House were generally listed first on that road.

¹⁴⁰ The Federal Census for 1910 lists John H. Driscoll as an Irish servant and farm laborer who was then living with the Thomas J. Burke family. Exactly when he moved across the road is not known. The directory for 1921 lists Annie W. Burke as boarding on Bedford Road (presumably with her parents), as she did in earlier years. How long she continued to reside at the house is not known.

Waters, Peter (30, Laborer)	1933
Dole, Thalia H. (37, Housewife)	1934-1947
Dole, Harold S. (42, Musician; listed as Engineer, 1943)	
Dole, Diana (21, Student)	1941
[VACANT HOUSE	1948]
DeCoste, Helen C. (36, Housewife)	1949-1951
DeCoste, Joseph I. (40, Salesman)	

No record was found of the "Curtains" family on Old Bedford Road in the "List of Residents." However, long-time neighbor Salvatore Muscato also remembers that Dan Curtains, the Concord Chief of Police, lived in the house at one time. His absence from the list may indicate that he was there for only a short period of time, or was inadvertently omitted.

Fire, Circa 1925

A "fireplace fire" occurred in the house during the tenancy of the Uhler family (sometimes found spelled "Euhler"), according to Alice Burke Hargrove. It is known from the "List of Persons Residing in Town of Concord" that the Uhlers were living on Old Bedford Road on April 1, 1925. Their former residence on April 1, 1924, had been on Sudbury Road, and they were no longer listed on Old Bedford Road on April 1, 1926. The Uhlers, in other words, appear to have lived at the house for less than two years, having moved from Sudbury Road to Old Bedford Road sometime after April 1, 1925, and from Old Bedford Road to an unknown location sometime before April 1, 1926. The fire that occurred during their stay has therefore been dated "circa 1925."

Attempts to obtain more information about the fire have met with no success. A brief scan of the local Concord newspaper for the period of Uhler occupancy found no reference to a fire at the Meriam-Burke House. Likewise, two long-time Concord firefighters had no personal knowledge of, nor had they ever heard of, a fire at the house.¹⁴¹

Physical evidence of the fire survives in the house in the form of charred floor-framing members in the attic. The framing of the attic roof and side walls is new, having probably been replaced shortly after the fire. Charring also remains at first-story level in the circa-1810 addition: on paneling at the top of the cellar stairway, underneath the present stairway from the first to the second stories. Exactly where in the house the fire originated is not known. Possibly a fire in the

¹⁴¹ One fireman is Thomas Tombeno, who began working as a firefighter in 1935, and who served as Chief of the Fire Department from 1959 to 1974. He said there was no fire at the Meriam House when he worked for the Fire Department. The other fireman is Jack Chisholm, a retired fireman, who served with the Fire Department for 28 years. Mr. Chisholm had an interest in the old records of the Fire Department, and recalled in a telephone conversation with Barbara Yocum on Sept. 20, 1993, that the old log books date from the 1870's to about 1910; he knows of no log books for the 1920's-1940's.

fireplace of one of the front bedrooms spread to both the roof and the back stairway of the kitchen addition.

Extensive renovations were made to the house by Ellen Burke's husband, Thomas J. Burke, after the fire. These included the following work items.¹⁴²

Exterior

- New glazed door installed at the back doorway.
- New six-over-six window sashes installed in the second-story windows.
- Dormer with two windows installed on the back (north) side of the house.
- New roof framing, sheathing boards, and attic side walls installed.
- New shingle siding probably installed on the east side of the house.
- Exterior painted dark green, and trim painted white.

Interior, First Story

- New floorboards (southern yellow pine, 3 1/4 inches wide) installed in the southeast parlor (Room 108) and the northwest room off the kitchen (Room 103).
- New back stairway and tongue-and-groove paneling installed in the circa-1810 kitchen addition.

Interior, Second Story

- New floorboards (southern yellow pine, 3 1/4 inches wide) installed in the rooms of the circa-1810 kitchen addition.
- New partition walls and window dormer installed in the center room (Room 205) of the circa-1810 kitchen addition.
- Doorway relocated and new four-panel door installed between the southeast bedroom (Room 209) and the back hall (Room 206).
- New closet and closet door installed in the southwest bedroom (Room 202).
- Attic entrance relocated to the back hall of the circa-1810 kitchen addition.

¹⁴² Identifying the post-fire renovations was accomplished by talking with Alice Burke Hargrove, who said her father had built the north dormer when the house was leased to tenants, and by comparing the paint layers associated with the dormer with the paint layers on other features of the house.

Interior, Attic

- Fire-damaged roof framing and side walls replaced by new framing.
- New tongue-and-groove floorboards installed.
- Attic stairway on the west side of the chimney replaced by a ladderway in the northeast corner of the attic.

Willow Pond Restaurant Lot, 1928-1977

The "Willow Pond Kitchen" is an informal, one-story restaurant situated on the north side of Lexington Road, east of the former East Quarter Schoolhouse. The building sits on a lot that is a portion of the 4-acre meadow originally purchased by Ephraim Meriam from his cousin John Meriam in 1803. The land remained as part of the Meriam farm through 1871, and was next conveyed to the Burke family in 1871 and again in 1922.

The tax assessment records indicate that Ellen Burke was first taxed for an eating establishment on one-half acre of land in 1928, and continued to be so taxed through 1946.¹⁴³ It is not known whether she leased the property or was the proprietor. The early development and growth of the site when it was owned by Ellen Burke is documented in the tax records as follows:

<u>DATE(S)</u>	<u>BUILDING(S) & VALUE(S)</u>
1928-1929	Clam-bake house \$350.
1930-1933	Building \$350.
1934-1936	McManus stand \$1,200. Stand 300.
1937-1938	Ice-cream stand \$1,200. Clam house 300.
1939-1946	Lunch-room \$1,200. Small lunch room 300.

¹⁴³ The half-acre of land was valued at \$250 for the years 1928 through 1946.

Ellen Burke finally sold approximately 53,330 square feet (or 1.22 acres) of the parcel, with the buildings thereon, to Ross and Emily Ranson on November 29, 1946.¹⁴⁴ The Ransons continued to develop the site during their ownership, as is documented in the tax records:

<u>DATE(S)</u>	<u>BUILDING(S) & VALUE(S)</u>
1947	Lunch-room \$1,000. Small lunch-room 300.
1948	Lunch room \$1,800. Garage 200.
1949-1950	Lunch room \$3,000. Garage 300. Trailer 1,500.
1951-1956	Lunch room \$3,000. Garage 300.
1957-1958	Lunch room \$3,600. Garage 150.

The last owners of record are Peter and Mary Sowkow, who purchased the property in 1958-1959.¹⁴⁵ Their tax valuations through 1977 were as follows:

<u>DATE(S)</u>	<u>BUILDING(S) & VALUES</u>
1959-1962	Lunch room \$3,600. Garage 150.
1963	Lunch Room \$4,400. Garage 150.
1964	Lunch Room \$13,200. Parking Area 450.
1965-1968	Lunch Room \$14,400. Parking Area 450.
1969-1977	Commercial \$27,940.

¹⁴⁴ Middlesex County Deed, Book 7082, p. 12.

¹⁴⁵ Middlesex County Deed, Book 11168, p. 297.

New Barn and Garage, 1940-1941

Gerard Burke, the youngest child of Thomas J. and Ellen Burke, remembers that the old (circa-1898) barn on the west side of Old Bedford Road was replaced with a new, smaller barn around 1944.¹⁴⁶ Neighbor Salvatore Muscato remembers the new barn as being similar in style to the garage that was built about the same time next to Thomas J. Burke's house.

A review of tax valuations for the 1940's indicates that the barn and garage were both built sometime between 1940 and 1941. The "barn" was valued in 1940 at \$400, and in 1941 at \$200, suggesting a smaller structure. Similarly, Thomas J. Burke was assessed in 1940 for a "Garage, unfinished," and in 1941 for a "Garage" valued at \$200.

This smaller barn was torn down when the Burke family stopped farming, according to Gerard Burke. It is not known exactly when this occurred. The garage, on the other hand, is still standing today.

¹⁴⁶ The conversation with Gerard Burke was relayed by neighbor Salvatore Muscato to Barbara Yocum, Aug. 4, 1993; see Appendix D.

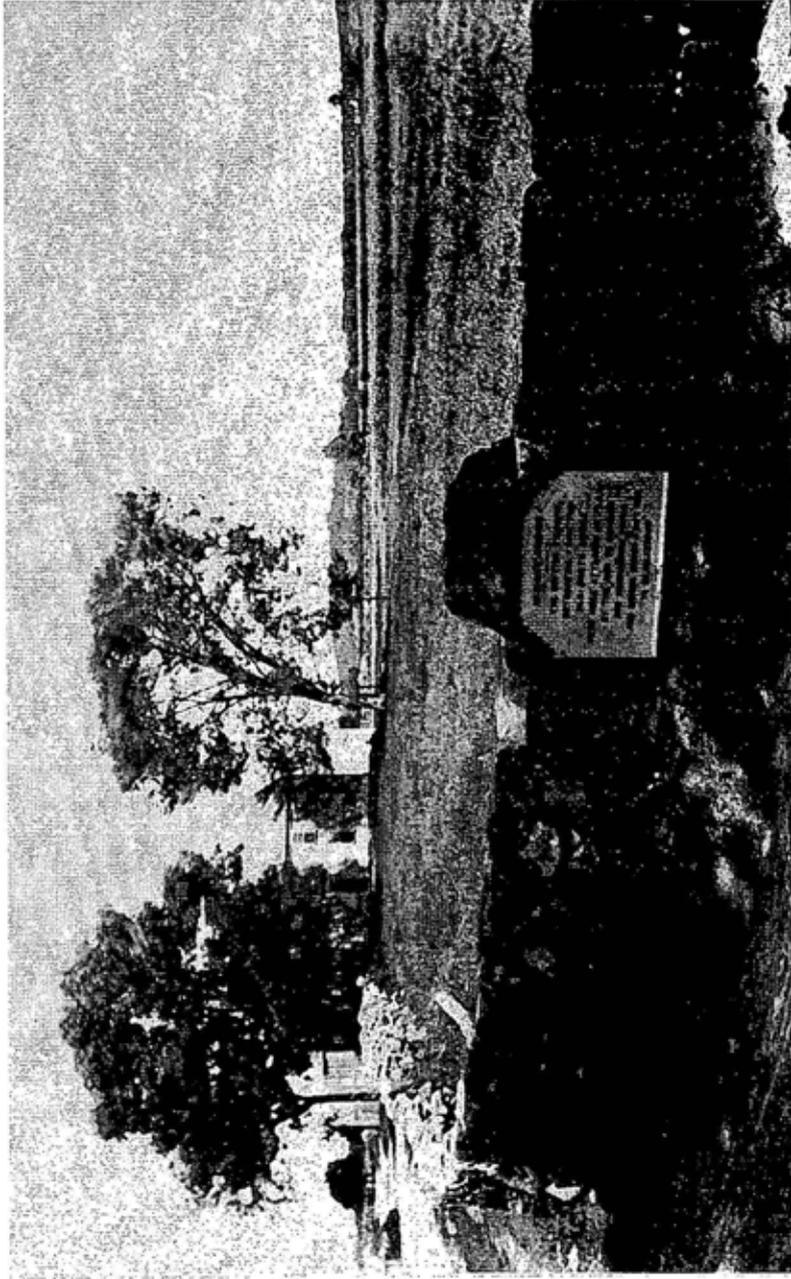


Figure 5. Earliest-known exterior view of the Meriam House, taken after the memorial stone was installed in 1885, and before the barn was demolished sometime between 1898 and 1899.

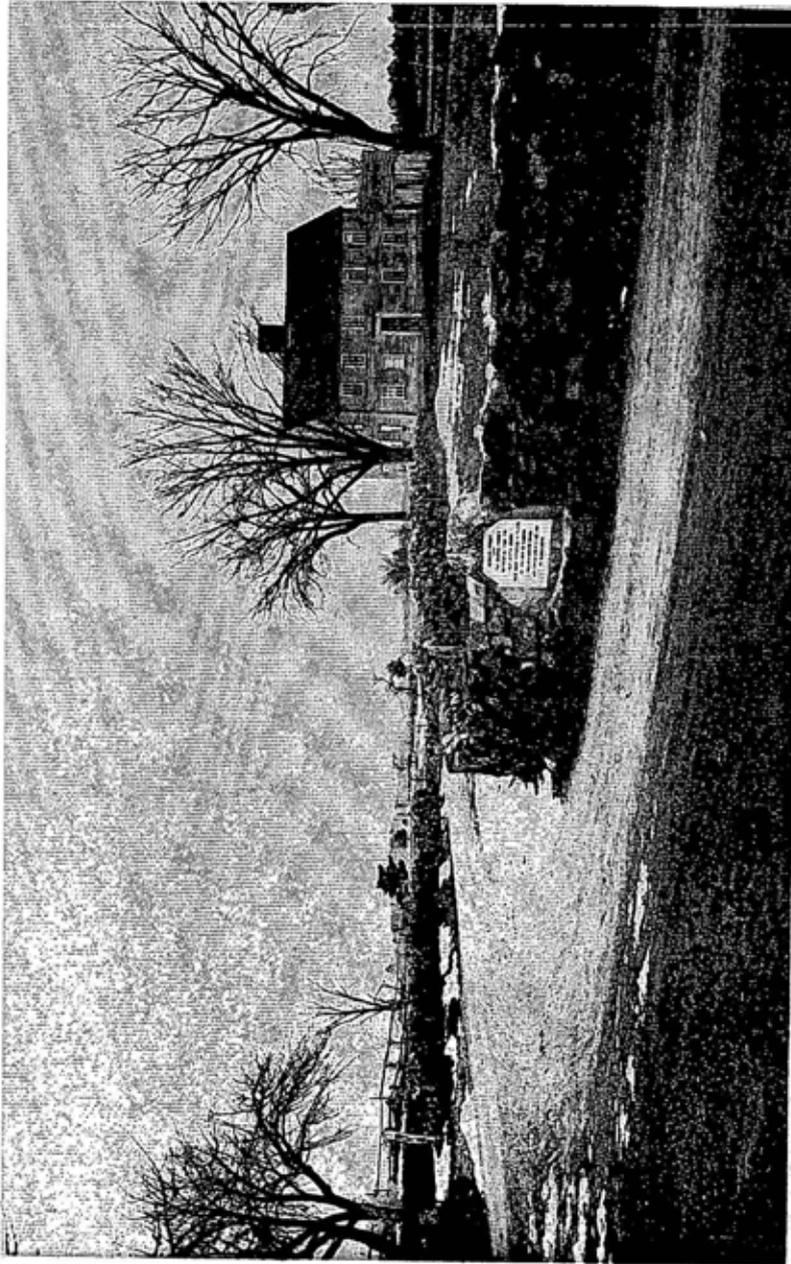


Figure 6. Meriam House exterior, view looking northeast, circa 1899.

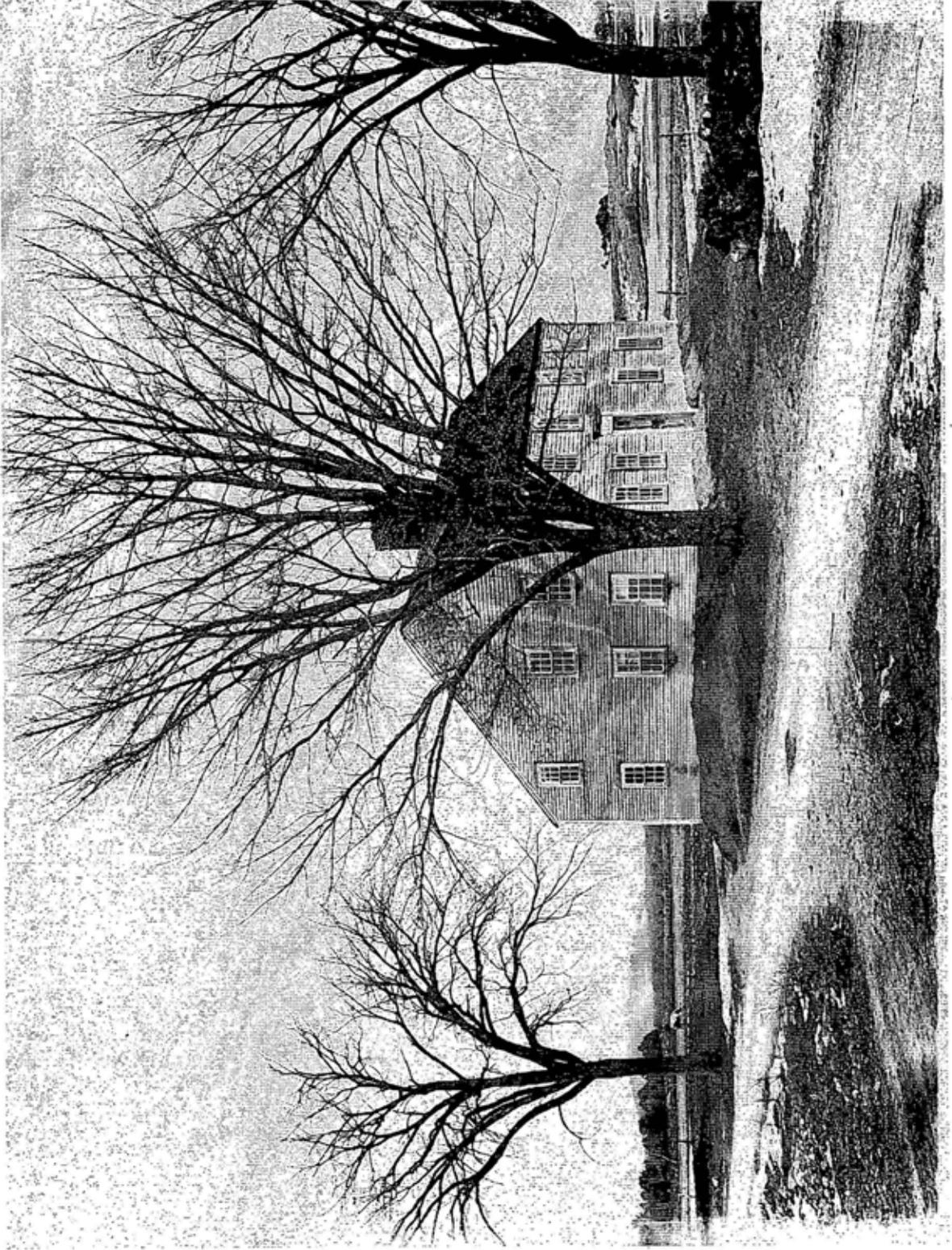


Figure 7. Meriam House exterior, view looking northeast, circa 1899.

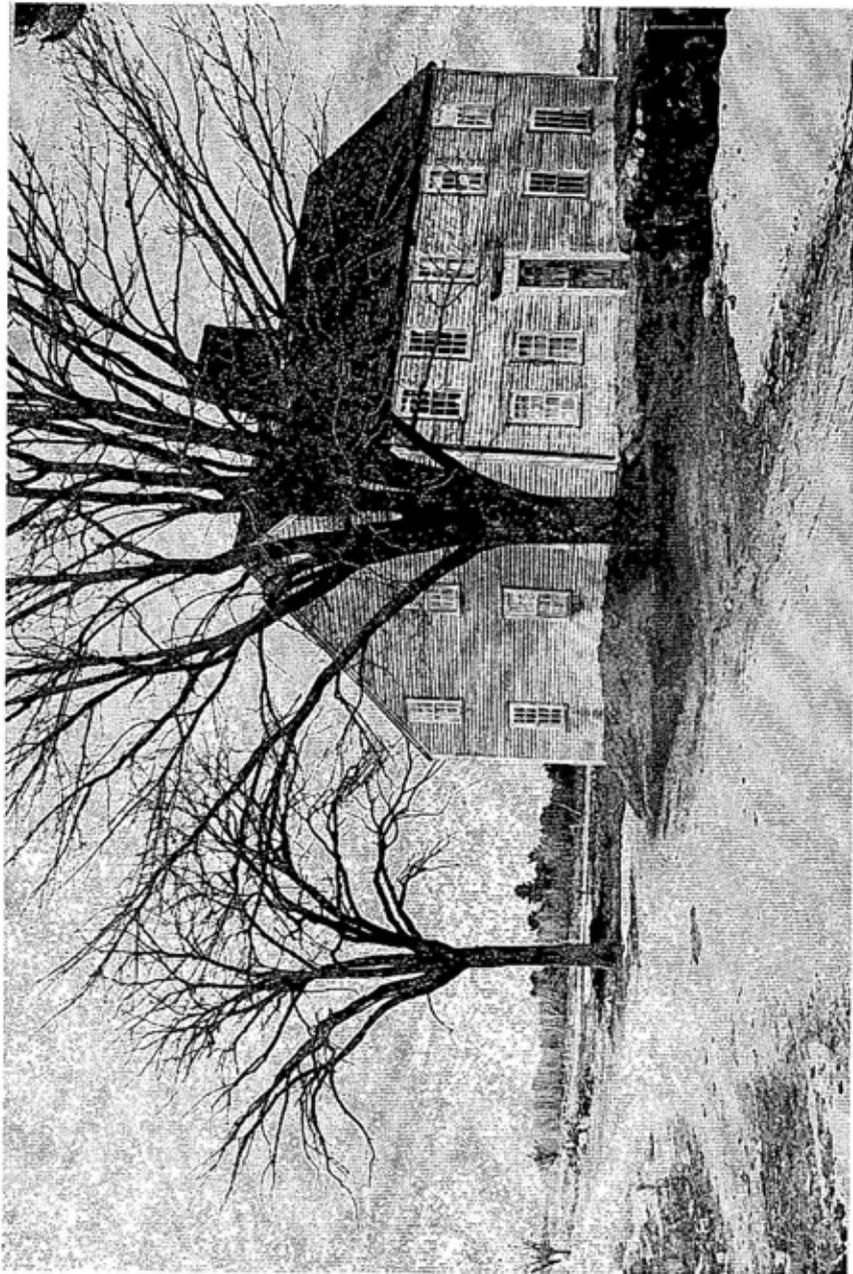


Figure 8. Meriam House exterior, view looking northeast, circa 1899.

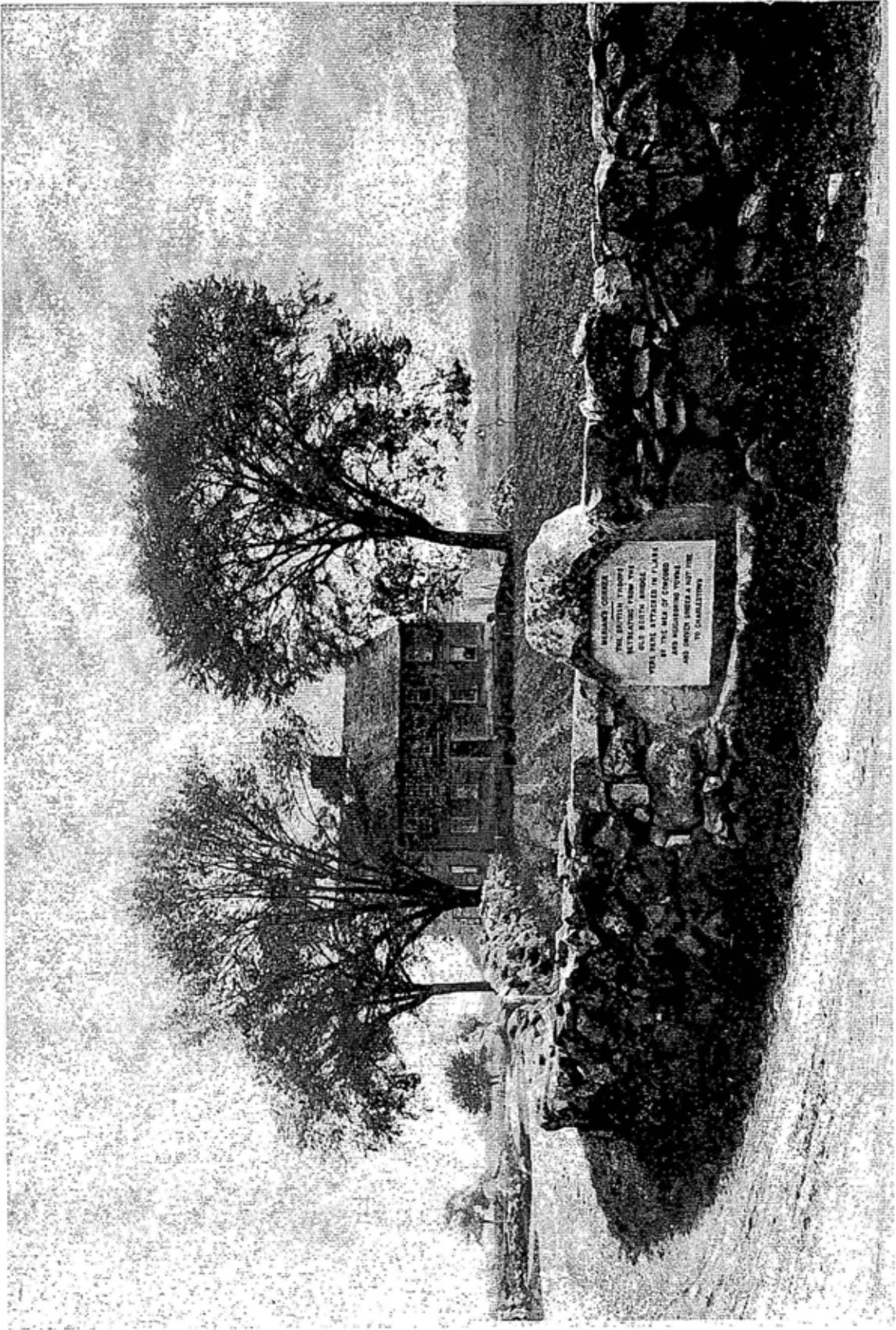


Figure 9. Meriam House exterior, view looking northeast, circa 1899.



Figure 10. Meriam House exterior, view looking northeast, circa 1900.



Figure 11. Thomas J. Burke and horse "Dandy Jim" in front of the Meriam House, circa 1900-1903.

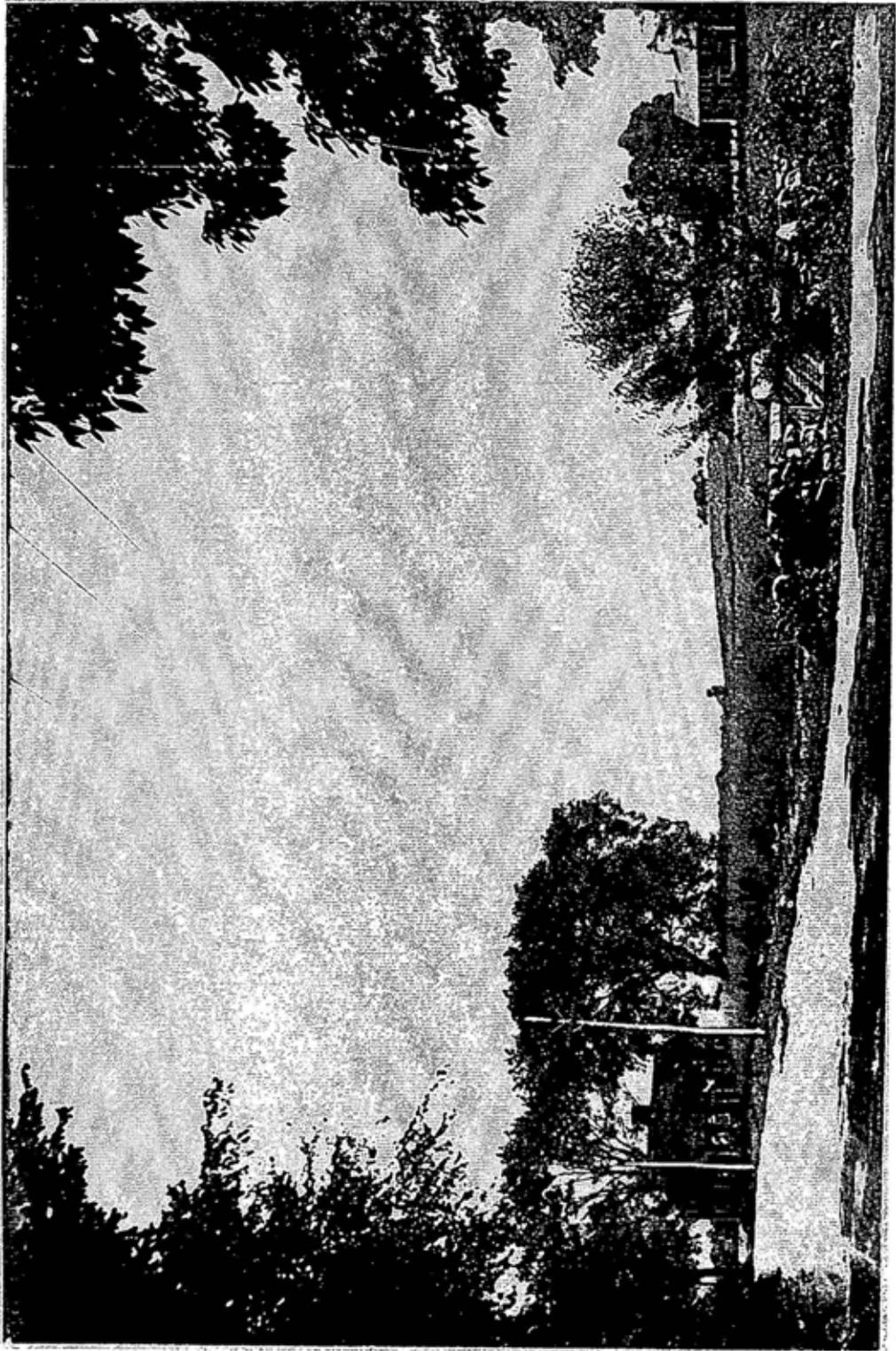


Figure 12. View looking northeast, showing the Meriam House and the former East Quarter School House, circa 1905.



Figure 13. Rose and Thomas Burke, in front of the Meriam House, circa 1905.



Figure 14. Meriam and Burke Houses, view looking north, circa 1910.



Figure 15. Thomas Burke in front of the Meriam House,
circa 1910.

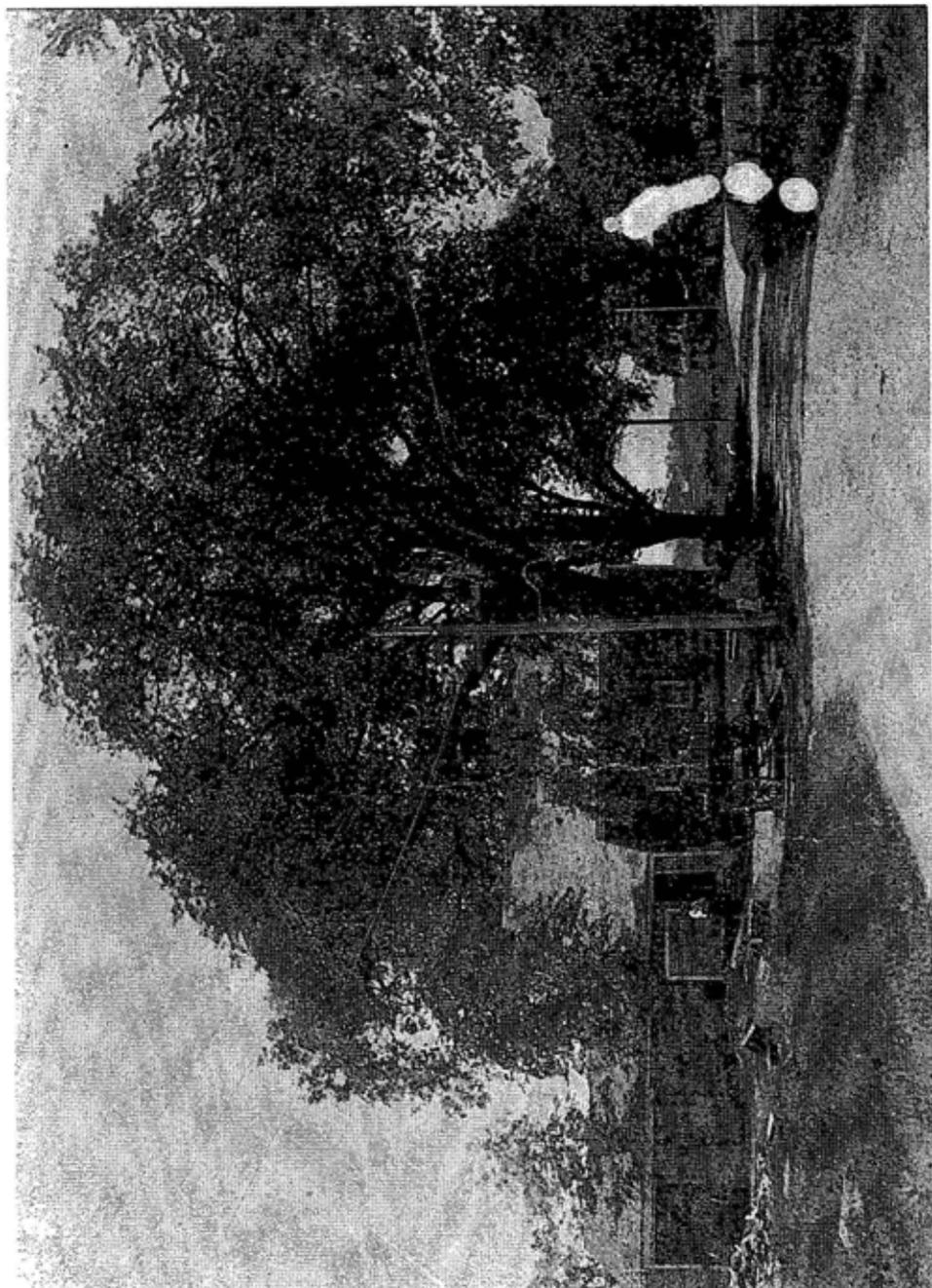


Figure 16. Back view of the Meriam House, circa 1912.



Figure 17. Meriam House, view looking northwest, circa 1937.

INGRAHAM FAMILY OWNERSHIP

James W. and Margaret A. Ingraham were the third, and last, family to own the Meriam House. They purchased the property from Ellen T. Burke in 1951; owned it until 1987; and retained life tenancy until the death of James Ingraham in 1991.

Deed Dated 1951

Ellen T. Burke conveyed a small portion of the Meriam-Burke farm, including the old Meriam-Burke House, to James W. Ingraham and his wife Margaret on February 7, 1951. The property deed of that date described the parcel as follows:

That parcel of land in said Concord with the buildings thereon bounded and described as follows: Beginning at a stone bound on South side of Old Bedford Road near Lexington Road, thence N. 56° 17' 45" E. a distance of 42.56 ft. along Old Bedford Road to a stone bound; thence along a curved line, radius equal 1820.71 ft., a distance of 232.20 feet to a stone bound; thence N. 48° 59' 15" E. a distance of 63.75 feet to a stone bound at other land of Ellen T. Burke. Then along land of said Burke S. 54° 50' 45" E. a distance of 123.56 feet to a stone bound thence S. 32° 19' 45" W. a distance of 168.12 feet to a stone bound near a brook; thence Southwesterly along said line of Brook approximately 245 feet to street line at Lexington Road; thence Northwesterly along Lexington Road on a curved radius, equal 790.40 feet, approximately 155 feet to a stone bound; thence on another curved line, radius equal 47.33 feet, a distance of 98.44 feet to point of beginning. Above described parcel containing 77,000 square feet [about 1.77 acres] more or less.

A survey of the land, which had been made in January 1951, was recorded with the deed and is included in this report as figure 18. The plan shows the outline of the house, but no other structures on the property.

James and Margaret Ingraham

James and Margaret Ingraham relocated to their new home in Concord from Newton, Massachusetts, in 1951, according to the "List of Persons Residing in Town of Concord." This list also indicates that James W. was born in 1908 and Margaret was born in 1910, making them about 43 and 41 years old, respectively, in 1951. James Ingraham was described as a "Building Superintendent" for the years 1952-1953, and an "Architectural Engineer" for the years 1954-1965.¹⁴⁷ Margaret was listed during those years as a "Housewife."

¹⁴⁷ Mr. Muscato remembers that James Ingraham was a long-time employee of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Both of the Ingrahams had an interest in antique furniture, according to their neighbor Salvatore Muscato. He remembers that they would go antique hunting on weekends, and store their furniture finds in two of the larger outbuildings on the property.¹⁴⁸

The Ingrahams also appear to have run an antiques business out of their house for a short while, between the years 1952-1956. A one-year permit was granted by the Town of Concord Board of Appeals on April 28, 1952, after which it was determined that "the use of the premises...has not proved to be detrimental or injurious to the neighborhood." A three-year extension was therefore granted the next year, with the following provisions:

1. That there shall be no show-window or other external feature not customarily in dwelling houses;
2. That there shall be no exterior display of merchandise or other advertising of such use, except a sign or signs not exceeding three square feet in aggregate area, the design and size to be submitted to the Board for approval;
3. That such use shall continue only during the occupation of the premises by at least one of the petitioners, and shall cease on May 1, 1956, unless an extension thereof shall be duly approved by the Board.¹⁴⁹

No continuation request is in the files for the year 1956, so it is assumed that the Ingrahams were no longer operating their antique business by that time.

Margaret and James Ingraham had no surviving children.¹⁵⁰ Mrs. Ingraham lived the rest of her life at the house at Meriam's Corner. She died in Concord, at the age of 80, at the "Walden House Healthcare" facility.¹⁵¹ Mr. Ingraham remarried, and relocated to a new house in Yarmouth, Maine, in 1990. He died there on December 27, 1991.¹⁵²

Restoration and Renovation Work, 1951-1969

In addition to their avocational interest in antique furniture, James and Margaret Ingraham also took a great interest in their historic house. In their letter to the Concord Board of Appeals dated April 15, 1953, they headed the addressee portion of the letter with "Old Meriam House."

¹⁴⁸ Conversation with Barbara Yocum, Aug. 4, 1993.

¹⁴⁹ Files of the Concord Building Department.

¹⁵⁰ Mr. Muscato says the Ingrahams had no children, but he remembers being told that a child had died.

¹⁵¹ Certificate of Death, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. James Ingraham is listed on the certificate as being a "Dealer" in the business of "Primitive Art and Antiques."

¹⁵² Offices of the Town Clerk, Town of Concord and Town of Yarmouth. Unfortunately, no interviews or oral histories were recorded with the Ingrahams by the National Park Service.

The Ingrahams' involvement with their house was also noted several years later, in a report written in June 1958:

The most recent owner of the old two-story dwelling...claims that evidence on the huge central chimney points to a date of origin not later than 1639 [sic]....

This truly important house was owned by Meriam descendants until 1871. It then fell gradually into a state of neglect and disrepair until it was purchased about a decade ago by the present proprietor, who was particularly interested in its aspects of both age and tradition. A few improvements have been added to make it convenient for modern living, especially in the kitchen part of the lean-to and an adjoining shed at the east end. The distinctly early architectural features, however, which give the house its real character of antiquity, such as the chamfered summer beams supporting the first-story ceiling and the great fireplaces on the central chimney, have been saved and treated in such a manner that nearly perfect restoration could be achieved.¹⁵³

It is clear from the report that the Ingrahams had undertaken some work on the house after they purchased it in February 1951. This is also reflected in the tax assessment records, in which significant increases in the value of the house are recorded for the years 1952-1956, as follows:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>OWNER</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>VALUE</u>
1951	Burke	House (Old)	\$1,800
1952	Ingraham	House	2,500
1953	"	House	2,900
1954	"	House & 2-car garage	2,900
1955	"	" "	3,400
1956	"	" "	3,400
		Gardenhouse	200

¹⁵³ *The Lexington-Concord Battle Road: Interim Report of the Boston National Historic Sites Commission to the Congress of the United States*, pp. 166-168.

Unfortunately, details of the work performed by James and Margaret are difficult to ascertain, because neither is alive today, and there are no surviving children. Mr. Ingraham did remarry, however, and his widow Pauline Ingraham lives in Yarmouth, Maine. A letter was sent to her on September 20, 1993, inquiring if Mr. Ingraham had left any documentation of his work on the house in Concord, such as photographs, contractors' bills, architectural drawings, or a record book. She replied on November 11, 1993, that she had not found any such materials, although she had not yet gone through all her husband's papers. Furthermore, she thought it might be possible that some paperwork had been discarded when the attic was cleaned out, after the National Park Service took possession of the house.¹⁵⁴

The restoration and renovation work done by the Ingrahams was therefore identified by talking with long-time neighbor Salvatore Muscato, and with Thomas and Rose Burke's granddaughter, Alice Burke Hargrove (who remembers what the house looked like when her grandparents lived there). Mrs. Hargrove also provided a rare photograph showing the back side of the house dated circa 1912, which was helpful in determining the changes made there (fig. 16). The physical examination of the existing architectural fabric undertaken for this report, including the paint analysis, was also helpful in pinpointing the Ingrahams' alterations.

According to Salvatore Muscato, Mr. Ingraham used a number of contractors to accomplish much of the work on the house. A modern garage replaced the old carriage shed that was in poor repair, and the back shed was renovated as a kitchen.¹⁵⁵ Mr. Muscato assisted by repairing and painting the ceiling in the kitchen. He also helped to pour a concrete foundation in the cellar at the base of the chimney, which began to collapse when the furnace was installed.¹⁵⁶ In the yard, Mr. Muscato provided and planted most of the evergreen trees that exist on the property today.

Alice Burke Hargrove described the house as it looked when her grandparents were in residence (see Appendix D). She also noted the following changes as having been made by the Ingrahams.

- The brick wall was exposed in the front stair hall (Room 101).
- The plaster walls and ceiling were removed from the southwest dining room (Room 102).
- In the old kitchen (Room 104), the kitchen stove, sink, and partition wall were removed; the fireplace was opened; and new windows were installed at the north wall.
- The old dairy shed was converted to a kitchen (Room 107).
- A closet was added to the east entry hall (Room 105).

¹⁵⁴ Letter from Pauline B. Ingraham (48 North Street, Yarmouth, ME) to Barbara Yocum, Nov. 11, 1993. Some documentation may yet be found, since Mrs. Ingraham plans to look through the remaining papers, which are in cold storage, in the spring when the weather warms.

¹⁵⁵ The new garage appears to have been built between 1952 and 1953, based on the tax records.

¹⁵⁶ Conversation with Barbara Yocum, Aug. 4, 1993. Mr. Muscato does not recall the names of any of the contractors.

- The pantry off the east entry hall (Room 106) was converted to a bathroom, with a new doorway in the north wall and a new window in the east wall.
- The brickwork was exposed at the fireplace in the southeast parlor (Room 108).
- The “indoor-outdoor” toilet was removed from the old carriage shed.
- A “heatolator” was removed from the floor of the southwest bedroom (Room 202).
- The west bathroom and hall (Rooms 203-204) in the second story replaced the room for the “hired girls.”
- The brick patio was built on the southeast side of the house.¹⁵⁷
- Beautiful gardens were planted around the house.

Mrs. Hargrove also remembers that the house was allowed to deteriorate in later years.

New electrical wiring and an oil-burning furnace were both installed in 1951, based on the permits for this work that were found nailed to wood posts in the cellar.

Varnished wide pine boards were installed throughout the house, on both the walls and floors, by the Ingrahams. The wood was reused from elsewhere, perhaps from the old carriage shed, based on the presence of unused square nail holes. Modern square-headed nails attach the woodwork to the walls, but old wrought-iron nails were added randomly to give the woodwork an “antique” look. Crude hand-planing marks are also evident, which was also most likely done to make the paneling look authentic. Finally, the complete absence of any paint remnants is final proof that the woodwork is not original to the house.¹⁵⁸

The Ingrahams also installed other antique building parts that were not original to the house, such as early paneled doors and door hardware. In addition, some early paneled doors were removed from their original doorways in the first story and reused in new locations throughout the house.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ This may be the “porch” that was valued at \$50, and which appeared in the tax records for the first time in 1957.

¹⁵⁸ Some authentic wide-board paneling and floorboards do survive in the southeast parlor, the back rooms, and the southeast bedroom of the house. For details, see “Architectural Description.” Mrs. Hargrove was also of the opinion that the wall paneling had been most likely installed by the Ingrahams.

¹⁵⁹ The original locations of the doors were determined based on their characteristic layers of paint, as identified by the paint analysis.

The microscopic analysis of the painted finishes of the house indicates that the exterior color was changed from yellow with white trim to red with white trim around 1951. The next painting changed both the body and trim color to a charcoal gray, which color the house is still painted today.

Inside, multiple layers of paint were removed from the main stairway and selected woodwork in the two front rooms. The southwest room in the first story was also "restored" to its earlier appearance by removing the plaster finishes and exposing the framing.

A new bathroom with pink fixtures was installed in the northwest corner of the second story around 1958, based on the date "JAN 7-1958" embossed on the interior side of the toilet tank cover. The earlier bathroom, on the east side of the second story, also appears to have been remodeled at this time, based on the similar style of the built-in cabinets. Two new closets also appear to have been installed in the back bedroom about this time.

Outside, three small outbuildings were assembled in the back and side yards. The earliest was most likely the small garden house on the north side of the house. It appears to be a "Walpole"-style building, which was a prefabricated structure made by Walpole Woodworkers, Inc., of Walpole, Massachusetts. A booklet featuring *Walpole Small Buildings*, copyrighted 1956, was found in the cellar on Mr. Ingraham's workbench (fig. 19). Within the booklet are sketches of elevations and plans in pencil, suggesting that Mr. Ingraham was either considering ordering a Walpole Building, or was using the booklet for design ideas. Whatever the case, the small building was built around 1956, based on the tax valuation for that year that listed a "Gardenhouse" for the first time, valued at \$200.

A second small building was moved to a site on the east side of the house in 1960, according to an approved application for a building permit dated October 5, 1960.¹⁶⁰ The application describes the building as a "Tool House," measuring 10 feet by 16 feet, that was being moved from Cambridge to Concord. A small sketch of the floor plan shows the structure as having a doorway and window in the front end, one window in the back end, two windows on the left side, and one window on the right side—the same configuration as the existing building. The permit further describes the building as having shingle siding, a gable roof with roll roofing, a wood floor, a plasterboard interior finish, and electric lights. The cost of the structure was \$75. Interestingly, the new building was not added to the tax rolls until 1969, when it was listed as a "dwelling" valued at \$640.

A third outbuilding resembling a small cottage was added to the east yard sometime before 1969, when it was listed in the tax records as a "dwelling" valued at \$650. No other documentation exists for this structure. It is 1 1/2 stories high with a gable roof; it has an open, shed-roof porch on the front side, wood-shingle siding, and windows with six-over-six wooden sashes.

¹⁶⁰ A copy of the application is in the files of the Concord Building Department.

Chimney Rebuilt, 1984

The brick chimney appears to have been rebuilt above the level of the roof in 1984. The date is based on an inscription, "CW + MG 84," in the portland-cement parging that covers the top surface of the chimney. In addition, the mortar between the bricks is the same type as the parging, and the bricks themselves are a mixture of reused exterior and interior (charred and salmon) types. Finally, comparison of a photograph of the house taken in 1963 (fig. 20) with the existing chimney indicates that the brickwork pattern has changed, and that the chimney is shorter today than it was in 1963.

United States Government Taking, 1987

Public Law 86-321, dated September 21, 1959, authorized the Secretary of the Interior to acquire lands designated as being within Minute Man National Historical Park. Because the Ingrahams' property was defined as being within the park (Tract No. 04-106), it was therefore within the jurisdiction of the United States Government to acquire the property by condemnation. This it did on April 21, 1987, when the fair market value and just compensation for the property were determined to be \$600,000.¹⁶¹

The terms of the condemnation stipulated that the Ingrahams were to retain "Life Estate," that is, the right to use and occupy the property during their lives. Furthermore, the property was to remain in use as a single-family, noncommercial residence. No alterations were to be made without first obtaining written permission from the National Park Service. Any construction work performed was to be in accordance with "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings." Finally, the National Park Service was responsible for maintaining the grounds, while the Ingrahams were responsible for paying the taxes and other assessments.¹⁶²

Both Margaret and James Ingraham are said to have been in ill health in the latter years of their lives. Little maintenance work was therefore done on the house, and it was allowed to deteriorate.¹⁶³ Mrs. Ingraham died shortly after the condemnation, at the age of 80, on October 6, 1988.

¹⁶¹ Civil Action No. 78-0050-MA, Tract No. 04-106; United States of America, Plaintiff, v. 1.77 Acres of Land, More or Less, Minute Man National Historical Park, James and Margaret Ingraham, Defendants; "Final Judgment Based on Stipulation as to Compensation for Tract No. 04-106"; United States District Court, District of Massachusetts.

¹⁶² Civil Action No. 78-0050-MA, Tract No. 04-106.

¹⁶³ Conversation with Alice Burke Hargrove, Aug. 17, 1993; see Appendix D.

Despite his failing health, Mr. Ingraham remarried after his wife's death. He and his new wife Pauline continued to live in the house for a short while. A new handicapped-accessible toilet room was installed for him in the old first-story pantry.¹⁶⁴ The Ingrahams left the house around March 1990, when they moved to a new house in Yarmouth, Maine.¹⁶⁵ Mr. Ingraham died there the next year, on December 27, 1991.

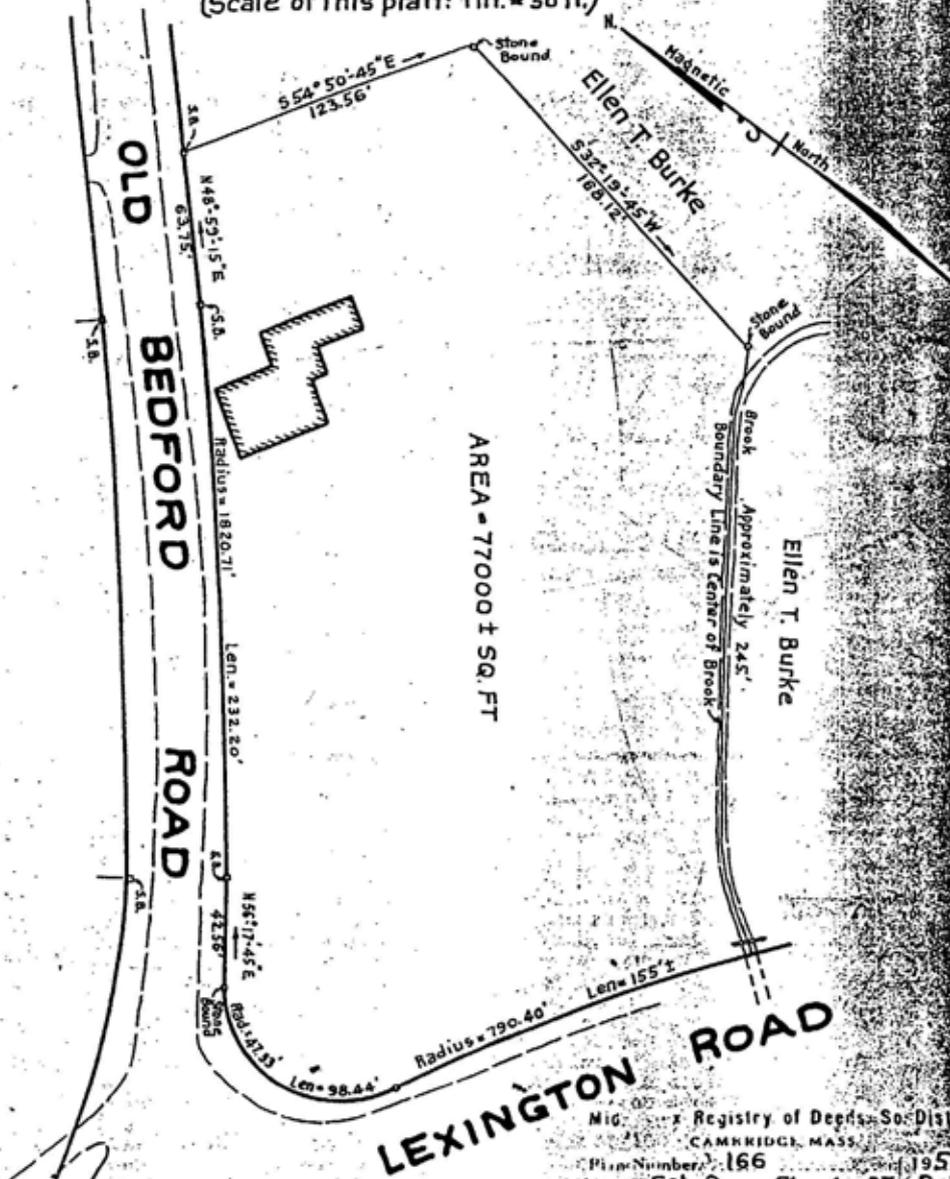
The house at Meriam's Corner therefore appears to have sat vacant during the last years of James Ingraham's "Life Estate"—from March 1990 through December 1991.

¹⁶⁴ Dan Detillo, MIMA Chief of Protection, to Barbara Yocum, Sept. 8, 1993. He remembers that Pauline Ingraham had a nursing background.

¹⁶⁵ The last month of occupation was probably March 1990, based on a calendar bearing that date in the kitchen.

Plan of Land in CONCORD MASS.		
belonging to Ellen T. Burke		
Date Jan. 1951	J. Edward Finigan Surveyor Cambridge Turnpike Concord Mass.	Scale 1" = 40'

(Original on file.)
(Scale of this plan: lin. = 50 ft.)

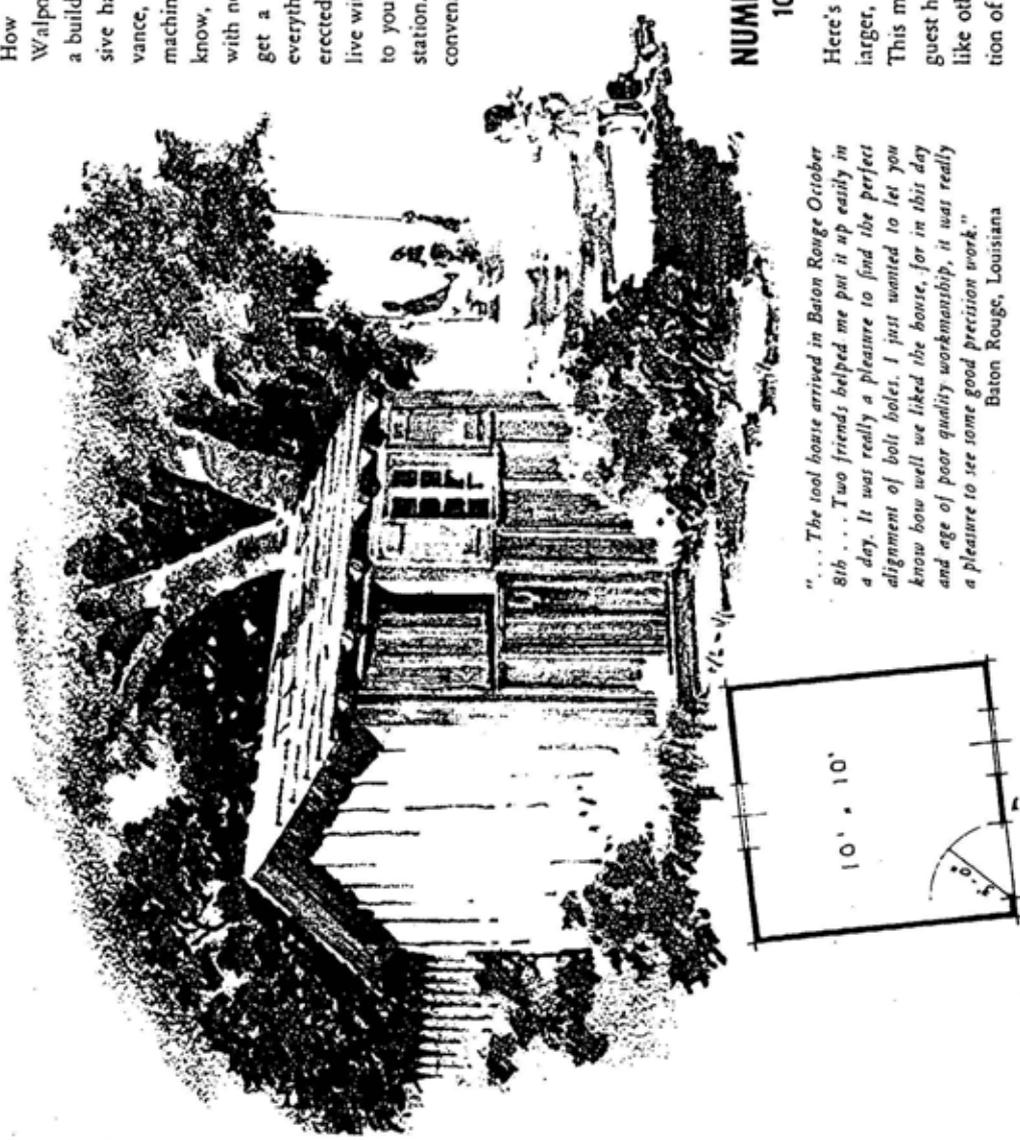


REGISTRY OF DEEDS - SO. DIST.
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
Plan Number: 166
Feb. 8, 1951 at 4:27 P.M.
with Deed
Ellen T. Burke
James M. Ingraham et ux
d. Book 7703 Page 584
Attest: *Albert R. ...*

Figure 18. Plan dated Jan. 1951, showing the property conveyed by Ellen T. Burke to the Ingrahams.

WALPOLE TOOLHOUSES

How much? Well, delivered and erected, Walpole Sectional Buildings cost no more than a building built in place by local labor. Expensive hand cutting and fitting is done, in advance, quickly and accurately by precision machinery in our shops. That's how you can know, to the exact cent, what the cost will be, with nothing forgotten, no hidden extras. You get a definite price on your building, with everything covered in the specifications, either erected by one of our erecting crews (if you live within our erecting area) or delivered right to your door by truck, or f.o.b. your freight station. And don't forget to ask about our convenient financing plan!



NUMBER FOUR 10' x 10'

Here's a really elegant tool house. It's a little larger, so people use it for lots of other things. This makes a wonderful ski camp, or an ideal guest house. It fits into many surroundings, and like other Walpole buildings, has the distinction of looking custom-built.

"... The tool house arrived in Baton Rouge October 8th... Two friends helped me put it up easily in a day. It was really a pleasure to find the perfect alignment of bolt holes. I just wanted to let you know how well we liked the house, for in this day and age of poor quality workmanship, it was really a pleasure to see some good precision work."

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Figure 19. Excerpt showing a "Walpole Toolhouse" from the 1956 catalog of Walpole Small Buildings, found in the cellar of the Meriam House.



Figure 20. Meriam House exterior, view looking northeast, 1963.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OWNERSHIP

The United States government assumed full responsibility for the Meriam House property upon the death of life-tenant James W. Ingraham on December 27, 1991. The property thus became part of the National Park Service's Minute Man National Historical Park.

The first action of the National Park Service was to request Mr. Ingraham's widow to remove the furniture and other personal belongings from the house. No one, apparently, asked Mrs. Ingraham if she had any records on the house that might be of importance, since she wrote in November 1993, "It's too bad they didn't ask me before I cleaned out the house." It is possible, therefore, that any documentation of Mr. Ingraham's restoration and renovation work in the 1950's was thrown away.

Because the National Park Service had no immediate plans to inhabit or restore the house, work was therefore done to "mothball" it. Water was drained from all the plumbing fixtures and the water meter was removed from the cellar. This made the heating system obsolete, due to the fact that it is a hot-water system. Ventilation of the interior, particularly in the winter months, therefore became a critical issue, and louvered sashes were installed in selected windows in the first, second, and attic stories. Two fans activated by a rheostat were also installed in the first story: a window model in a north window, and a floor model in the southeast parlor. Makeshift white curtains were hung in all the first-story windows to screen the vacant appearance of the house. A security light on a timer was also strategically placed in the second-story hall. Finally, a security and fire-detection system with remote dialer was installed.

Not until December 1992 was an initial "Task Directive" prepared for a historic structure report on the Meriam House. Documentary research commenced in March of that year, followed by a physical investigation of the house. Research was conducted simultaneously for a cultural landscape report on the property.¹⁶⁶ An archeological investigation has not yet been undertaken.

¹⁶⁶ By Brian Donahue, Historian.